

Viktoro's Memoirs

by Viktor Nonong Medrano



An Island Child

And so it was at the beginning...

I was born at 10:45 in the morning on the 12th of January in the year 1966 in the Hospital de San Juan de Dios in Pasay City, a municipality of Metropolitan Manila on the island of Luzon in the Republic of the Philippines. That same year was when *Star Trek* started appearing on television. *Star Trek* would be my secret family years later and thereafter...

My Chinese zodiac sign became the Wood Snake. The date of my birth fell before Chinese New Year. In the Western zodiac, I became a Capricorn.

On the 6th of February of 1966, a priest baptized me in the Parish of Immaculate Conception in Batangas City.

As an infant, people raised me on goat's milk because I was allergic to cow's milk. So, right from the start, I was different from most everyone else. My earliest memory was when I threw my baby bottle up into the air as I was lying on a couch. There was a fuzzy view of a large ornate window with a semicircular arch; some light was shining through it. Perhaps, it was at some relative's house, like that of my maternal grandparents Lola Bebe and Lolo Mac in the town of Ibaan in the province of Batangas in the Philippines.

My Filipino nickname became 'Nonong', supposedly from my middle name 'Emmanuel'. Many Filipinos had a nickname that did not sound like their real name.

My family first lived in a place called Ferry in Batangas province. It was close to a harbour and close to jungle. Our house sat in the multi-house family estate owned by my paternal grandparents whom we affectionately called Mommy Lydia and Daddy Pito. Auntie Virgie's family, including some of my cousins, was nearby, as well as my Auntie Vicky. In the front yard of the estate was a canopy swing and at the back was a gazebo, where one time there was a jungle snake at its centre. There were some memorable things as I grew up there. There was a hidden cave amongst the trees in an elevated area. Inside the cave was a skeleton of a soldier, perhaps from World War II. We frequently picked berries which we called 'grátilis' out there. I often played with Auntie Vicky's music records and spun them with a nail. She was a dancer for the *Bayanihan* troupe and was well-travelled by then as she had all the weird momentos from her trips abroad. One of these trinkets was a *matryoshka* doll, the famous Russian nested doll, also called the *babushka* doll. She had shelves full of exotic souvenirs, like a museum. Both Auntie Vicky and Auntie Virgie liked the colour purple, a trait passed on to me. There were these snail-like animals from the ditches in front of the estate. If you put one in a bowl of vinegar, it would sip it up.

Esperanto...

Mi ofte manĝis inter la familianoj de geonkloj Virĝinia kaj Sonny ĉe ilia domo, konstruita el griza cemento. La manĝaĵo

estis ofte la rava *menudo* Filipina. En la manĝoĉambro, apud la larĝa tablo, pendante sur la griza cementa muro, estis granda multkolora tapiŝpentraĵo religie pri *La Lasta Vespermanĝo*.

Probably by the end of the 1960's or the beginning of the 1970's, my family moved to a two-storey apartment near Del Monte Avenue in Quezon City, Metropolitan Manila. The nearest landmark was an Esso gasoline station at the corner and farther afield was the Barrio Fiesta restaurant with a big sign shaped like an earthen pot or *palayók*. I would remember a few things from living in that apartment. My elder brother Fernando, nicknamed Gary or sometimes Gibong, and I watched a lot of television. We also made a mess of our room by making indoor encampments and tents out of blankets and chairs. One rare day, we glared at a solar eclipse, which was not advisable really because the sun's intense light could be harmful to the eyes. We had a pet turtle, which later my mother made a servant throw back into a river because of an old superstition that such an animal would hinder progress and prosperity. We once had an exotic aquarium (a gift from my paternal grandparents). We did not speak English at home, we all spoke Tagalog. We always had maids or servants to help in cleaning and cooking.

Esperanto...

Ekster la apartamento, min fascinis stranga trudherbo, tute verda, kun lanterneskaj pufaj kvazaŭfruktoj, kiuj estis aerpleniĝitaj. Mi amuze povis ekkrevigi ilin kiel balonetojn.

I attended The Mount Preparatory School near Del Monte Avenue. Then the next year, I attended Miss Nena García's

Kindergarten School. I was awarded a Merit Card for Arithmetic and a medal for "The Most Artistic" of that year 1971/1972. At that time, I was already learning some English and was fond of confusing the words 'alligator', 'escalator', and 'elevator'. These modes of transportation fascinated me then because of an enlightening magazine advertisement about a city full of escalators, elevators, and conveyors. 'Otis' was the name of the company.

Uncle Alberto, "*Tito* Boy" to me, one time chopped up some jackfruit with a machete, in the cement courtyard of the apartment. That giant fruit's rind was green and thorny, whilst its flesh was juicy and yellow. My other uncle, Tito Ed, by this time was already preparing to leave for America to find a new home. The whole family of my Auntie Virgie fled for California.

In the living-room of our apartment, there was a brown, wooden Chinese bar for drinks. It was about one metre high and had seven doors all around it. Rounded at the corners, it was rectangular in shape. The intriguing designs thereon depicted an ancient Chinese city with people dressed in robes and with surrounding drooping trees. Inside that fancy bar of camphor scent, one time I put my school art project of a necklace made of transparent polyester fibre and crayon-coloured styrofoam popcorn-shaped pieces.

Moma...

:: Wail living in da apartment, wan Krismas taim, ai bikeim sik wid a fiver en ai kud nat join da famili selebreishonz. Ai keim daun da steirz for a fiu minits tu si onkolz, onts, kozins, :: etc. ::, den ai went bak apsteirz. Leiter, evriwan left

for a parti samwer els. Iven da meidz wer ofduti dat nait. Ai keim daun agen tu plei wid da Krismas Tri laits. Bai skwizing, ai borst wan ov da smol laits en waz slaitli elektrokiuted. Ai went bak ap tu mai bed, den fel in a fiver slip en dremt ov smol plastik hotdogz en oder toi trinkets. Da slip drim waz so klir dat simd riyal... ::

Esperanto...

Kune kun mia familio, mi ofte vizitis librovendejojn en Manilo. La kovriloj de kelkaj sciencfantastaj romanoj kiel de Edgar Rice Burroughs vere intrigis min. Eble estis *Princino de Marso* kaj *La Ŝakpecoj de Marso* kaj tiel plu...



The Red Soil

Around the year 1973, we moved to a Spanish-style house at 23 Doña María St., Don José Heights, Quezon City, Metropolitan Manila. It was a great place to grow up. There were very few neighbours, scattered far and wide. I could see for kilometres around me, empty; the field of tall, wild yellow-green grass or *talahib* over red Martian-like soil stretched far beyond. I used to chase red dust devils, whirlwinds, which sometimes were as tall as a house. I would try to run to and stand in the centre of the vortex as it rapidly spun away. The lifeforms around there were interesting. The stray lizard would cross the road. Purple-leaved tuber vines grew in nooks and crannies. At night, there were illuminating fireflies, which we tried to trap in white handkerchiefs to create living "lanterns." The full moon looked huge. Beside our house was an empty lot where we grew crops and pitched tents. Peanuts grew well in the area, but the watermelon did not grow too

big. When the typhoons came, the water poured down so strongly that it carved the red soil. There were ominous thunder and lightning, and strong wind. A few times when it heavily rained with no typhoon, we innocent kids went outside naked on the lawn in the warm, tropical downpour.

Behind the house was a cliff, overlooking vacant land and there was a view of the mountain range where the military did their parachuting exercises. By the cliff was a verandah with a brick barbecue stall; there, we had our parties and my cousins danced the Hula.

The red plains around the house were essentially flat with a few escarpments. We kids used to hike around and pretend that each area was a different planet in our solar system: Mercury, Venus, Mars, and so forth. We were exposed to a lot of sci-fi from television programs from abroad, such as British ones like *Space: 1999* and *UFO*, as well as American ones like *The Time Tunnel* and, of course, *Star Trek*, and yet more humorous ones like *Sigmund and the Sea Monsters* and *My Favorite Martian*. In *My Favorite Martian*, I opined that Bill Bixby, who played one of the protagonists, the friend of the Martian in the show, was *guwapo*, good-looking, being a black-haired white man.

At that time, the English on television was a little rapid and fuzzy for my ears as if there were marshmallows in them, a bit like watching French television much, much later in my life. There were also subtitled Japanese shows like *Shintarō* about samurais and Japanese cartoons like *Gigantor*, but I was not fully conscious then of their "Japaneseness." Indeed, there were a few American cartoons also, like *Spiderman* and *Bugs Bunny*. I also liked the American series *Kung Fu*, which

starred David Carradine as a Shaolin monk wandering the Old Wild West; therefrom, I learnt about Chinese culture.

There were also some local shows in Tagalog; they included films about drama with handsome men and women, as well as about fantasy with Philippine equivalents of vampires, witches, gnomes, and other magical beings. I sometimes invaded the maids' quarters and there I found a lot of Tagalog comics of drama and of science fantasy, which included a story about a visit to an Eden-like jungle world by a spacecraft. But mostly, Tagalog comics were about romantic drama. That time was in the 1970's.

The red plains were an alluring place. There were a few lots where carpenters were constructing houses. These places became dangerous playgrounds for us kids when the workers were absent. But the trenches fascinated us. On the cut out soil, we could see geological formations, strata from different stages of time. And we could find intriguing fossils. Sometimes in the wide fields, we would look in vain at daytime for elusive meteorites, which we could see fall in the night sky.

Moma...

:: Samtaimz, in da ivning skai wen da san set, meni bats wud bi flatering in da eir en wi kidz wud trou roks at dem. Da bats wer mach tu klever en rapid tu bi hit bai a rok. Wi wud ol yel in da open eir en wi kud hir aur ekoz baunsing in da eir... ::

One time, a thermometer broke. My elder brother Fernando and I played with the shimmering liquid metallic ball, which came out of the shattered glass, by rolling it on the hardwood

floor of our bedroom until it dispersed into smaller liquid metallic balls and droplets. Such was not advisable really because mercury was a poison...

Our lush garden had various tropical plants and sometimes the rare snake hissed in the undergrowth. After a rain, there would be a few colourful flatworms on the lawn. I was an early biologist as a child; I cross-pollinated a white hibiscus flower, *gumamela* in Tagalog, with a red one, and soon enough, a pink *gumamela* would later appear. We had a caterpillar circus in the backyard and called it "Beauty Park." Luscious iridescent beetles abounded. There were many different kinds of ants, small and large; black, red, and blue. A solitary bullfrog the size and weight of a bowling ball sat in the corner of the garage. The driveway leading thereto was where we and my cousins practiced karate and my father practiced *arnís de mano*, a fighting skill with sticks, in the weekends. Curious onlookers outside on the street, a few poorer kids, would wonder what in heavens we were doing. And sometimes walking by the street, the vendor of sweet soybean curd, *tahô*, would shout "Tahooooooooô!" then he would stop and put down the canisters from his shoulders and scoop *tahô* into our plastic glasses, and each of us kids would pay a *peso* to him. That time was in the 1970's.

On the front lawn were two decorative, small, grassy hills. But workers soon flattened and removed them because of a superstition that such hills attracted spirits and dwarves. Around there was a *sineguelas* tree, known scientifically as *Spondias purpurea*. Its fruits, about three to five centimetres in length, commenced purple or maroon green and ripened to yellow or dark red.

Esperanto...

Ofte, mi faris paperan aeroplanon. Poste, mi flugigis ĝin tra la aero en la ĝardeno. Mi imagis, ke ĝi estis spacŝipo glisanta tra la nebula atmosfero de verda ĝangala planedo. Tiu scenaro restos en mia menso dum multaj jaroj en mia vivo.

Tiam, ni infanoj favoris pri la *Ludo de la Generaloj* aŭ *Salpakan* per la Tagaloga. Ĝi estis tabula militludo inventita, en Filipinoj, de Sofronio H. Pasola, Jr., en 1970.

Fakte, mia favorata ludilo tiam estis la kalejdoskopo. De truo en unu fino, tra la tubo, mi vidis diverskolorajn figurojn, kiuj estis malsamaj post kiam ĉiufoje mi skuis ĝin.

Inside the house, I used to lie flat on the cool marble floor of our living room on hot, summer days. On that same marble floor, I amused myself by creating a temple-like maze from green and white mah-jong blocks, then making a weevil go through it. Near the staircase was my father's cherished bar in the shape of a *kalesa*, a horse carriage. Therein were all sorts of bottled drinks for guests. We had a library room where, at one time, we kept vigorous spiders in glass jars and hung colourful, cardboard warplanes, like Messerschmidts and Zeros, from the ceiling. Upstairs were the bedrooms. One fine dawn in the children's bedroom where I slept was a good view of Comet Kohoutek, which orbited the sun about every 75 000 years.

In the room of my tutor, Tita Nedy, were fun collection jars of fungi and a set of curious Tarot cards. Like the character portrayed by Julie Andrews in the 1964 Walt Disney film *Mary Poppins*, Tita Nedy was the governess for us kids, who

considered her as a real aunt.

In the parents' bedroom was the television where we kids watched our cartoons and sci-fi from the Anglosphere, clay animations from Europe, and samurai shows from Japan, as well as local programs in Tagalog. That television was in colour, whilst the one in the living room downstairs was in black and white and our house servants often watched their dramas therefrom. Downstairs also was the guest room where Tito Boy often stayed and studied his graphic medical texts for university. That time was in the 1970's.

Esperanto...

Unu el la plej gravaj filmoj dum mia infanaĝo estis *The Illustrated Man* kun la ĉefa karaktero Carl, la stelulo Rod Steiger, kiu en la rakonto estis viro kies haŭto estis plene da tatuoj. La filmo estis mozaiko da prifuturaj rakontetoj, inkluzive de pluvplena planedo, holografia infanvartejo, kaj paradiza Tero kie la malmultaj homoj vivus en tendoj. La filmo estis bazita sur la libro de Ray Bradbury.

We had some pets too. One time, we brought down from a trip to Baguio City, a light-haired dog named Adobe, previously named Gray, which we had for a short while, but he suddenly disappeared one day. Like in Korea, some Filipinos ate dog meat as a delicacy, so we suspected the worst scenario. Then we had another dog, named Christie, who was mostly black-haired with a white-haired chest. We also had a white-feathered parrot named Vilma, left behind by my cousin Walter Daughash, who had emigrated to California. Vilma was named after a famous Philippine actress. The parrot apparently died of a heart attack on New Year's by the sound

of firecrackers. We had lots of stray cats who were unnamed and loitered the yard. One time, a cat bore lots of kittens in the backyard. Then one night, it rained heavily. The next morning, sadly I saw a few of those newborn kittens washed in the gutter.

Sometimes, the surrounding tall grass, the *talahib*, was deliberately set on fire to clear the area. The red plains would be ablaze. We kids watched in awe. One time, I accidentally fell on my knees on some burning grass. I returned home crying. My maternal grandmother, Lola Bebe, was so concerned and at the same time, furious. A house servant washed my knee burns in the big squarish, tiled sink outside near the kitchen area.

I would remember the names of our house servants. They were Nellie, Tonya, and Lina. Nellie was the youngest and the smallest, and Lina the tallest. They all somewhat looked of Malay and Chinese extraction. Nellie was the palest, which might suggest that she had Spanish blood also. But many Filipinos were a mixture of at least these three races.

Many maids came from faraway places like Bicolandia and the Visayan Islands. Their mother languages were various Austronesian languages related to Tagalog, but they learnt Tagalog in school for inter-ethnic communication. *Metro Manila* was the centre of this vast "Philippine Empire"...

(The *Earthsea* fantasy books by Ursula K. Le Guin involved a vast archipelago full of brownish people who believed in magic. *Earthsea* was *Terramar* in Spanish...)

People from our family town of Ibaan, Batangas, often

sojourned at our *Casa Medrano* at Don José Heights. There were Tita Lydia, who was a middle-aged woman, and Lillian, a young, svelte woman. They quite often helped in the kitchen. (Indeed, Filipinos often would use the endearing titles *Tito/Tita* for Uncle/Aunt even if there were no blood relation.)

One summer, we kids, including cousins, enrolled in art school. It was at a dainty place amidst dense vegetation on the same street as the new, grand Philippine Heart Center, one of the many pet projects of the Marcoses—Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos and First Lady Imelda Marcos. The course was oil painting on canvas. We learnt to blend colours and paint objects from afar. It was then that people suspected that I would be needing glasses. It must have been that inordinately fuzzy-looking stuffed rabbit that I painted one day. In the school was a "library" of sorts, as the books, many of them old, were unordered and scattered about on the shelves. Some of the unusual covers of the sci-fi books intrigued me. On another day in the vicinity of the school, in the garden, I was an unwary prey to a stinging, flying insect. Bzzzz! That time was in the 1970's.

Some kilometres away, in some higher altitude, there were swimming pools in a secluded wooded area called La Mesa Dam because indeed it was near a dam on a river. There, we swam on hot, summer days. A few times, we swam in the swimming pool of a woman named Perla, who lived in Fairview, a neighbourhood not far from Don José Heights.

There was a tie-in between these swimming pools, especially at La Mesa Dam, and a movie which I saw on television at home. The movie was called *The Swimmer* (1968) with the protagonist Ned Merrill, starring Burt Lancaster, who

strangely decided to swim from one wealthy friend's pool to another in an affluent Connecticut suburb.

At Don José Heights, far down the cliff was a Japanese-style house where two white American kids, brothers, lived. They had things with which we were not familiar called "skateboards." I did not think that they were permanent residents in the country. They spoke English. My brother and I usually rode foot-driven scooters to and fro. We also did have a green, foot-driven "go kart" that we often drove around the subdivision.

Although our area was full of relatively rich people, all along the lengthy Commonwealth Avenue, which led from our sparsely populated area to the more populated parts of Metropolitan Manila, were impoverished people in improvised wooden shacks. These people, locally known as "squatters" because they had no legal right to the land, were so poor that some of their children would walk around with no pants on. In Brazil, such shanty towns or slums were called *favelas*. Such slums existed everywhere in the developing world. Metropolitan Manila was the centre of the "Philippine Empire" and it magnetically attracted poor people, looking for employment, from outlying provinces of this vast "empire." The current sociopolitical and economic structure of the country failed these people...

I often promised my mother that one day I would be very affluent and own an island "na may haywey sa gitnâ" (with a highway in the middle). I much admired, in the Philippines, the estates of very rich people who had a long, luscious, garden-like driving lane towards their mansion. To get to my fantasy island, one would need an expensive helicopter. Well,

it was a kid's fantasy. I frequently read Richie Rich comics. A James Bond 007 movie which I saw had a rich man living on a luxurious island.

During vacation, we kids often went to the town of Ibaan in Batangas province. There lived relatives on my mother's side, Tita Bella and more cousins. There were some memorable things from there. In the middle of that town was an ancient Spanish-style Roman Catholic church. My maternal grandparents, Lolo Mac and Lola Bebe, lived in a big white house built in the 1950's.

My grandfather had an acupuncture clinic in the basement of his house. On his desk stood a light beige statuette of a human body with the major acupuncture points. He had specialized modern equipment—acupuncture with electricity. One time, he was a little careless, which was rare, and sent a vigorous electrical shock to a patient whose arm somewhat convulsed because the power was a bit high. I was there at the clinic and saw the whole thing. But probably, the whole town knew Lolo Mac as the best doctor.

Lola Bebe frequently tended her luscious garden. One could always see her watering the plants. There was a garden house full of tropical plants such as orchids. A few times, I saw that she set a small fire inside to smoke out the insects. The smoke was supposed to be good for the plants. The lawn was of a special type of grass whose leaves were somewhat crinkly at the edges. The grass did not require much cutting.

Esperanto...

Mi opiniis stranga, ke kelkaj najbaroj en la urbeto kelkfoje

pasis tra la korto, kvazaŭ neniŭ posedis ĝin. Mi surprize vidis ilin, kiam mi ripozis ĉe la verando.

Ne same kiel en Don José, la grundo en Ibaan ne estis ruĝa, sed estis brunigra.

In the yard were many fruit trees. There were mango trees, or botanically *Mangifera indica*. There were *kamyás* trees, botanically *Averrhoa bilimbi*, with their sour-tasting, longish yellow-green fruits, growing right off the trunk. There was a tall *santól* tree, botanically *Santorum koetjape*, with its yellow-orange fruits, having thick rinds and being the size of baseballs. The *santól* was not a citrus fruit. Inside the fruit of *santól* was white flesh surrounding big, oblate seeds. Also, there were *makopa* trees, botanically *Syzygium malaccense*, with their pinkish bell-shaped fruits whose subtle flavour I very much favoured.

Around the area were abandoned textile factories with strange treasures inside, like colourful drawings and wooden model ships. Nearby was Lola Ipáy's ancient-looking wooden abode, facing Tita Nedy's provincial home, wherein we kids listened to music by The Beatles; especially memorable was "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da." Tita Bella's too was near—an unpainted cement bungalow.

On the ground floor of Lola Ipáy's was the home of Reuben, her bachelor son. In front of there often would be leaf-woven mats on top of which were grains and *kamyás* fruits to dry under the tropical sun...

Farther away, there was a jungle river where I, my brother Fernando, Tita Bella, and my cousins of the Reyes family went

swimming. The river was wild and turbulent as we all festively trudged and swam along its banks. There were small black leeches, locally called *lintâ*, about 1 cm long, and they sometimes clung to the skin.

My cousins, my brother, and I used to listen to Tagalog radio broadcasts of fantasy stories. Whilst we stayed in Ibaan, my brother and I learnt the intonation and dialectal differences of Batangueño Tagalog. For instance, a slingshot was a *binit* in Ibaan, but a *paltík* in Manila. We considered Ibaan as a "hometown" even though we lived in Metropolitan Manila.

Ibaan at that time was full of dusty unmade roads. There were many unpainted wooden houses. Some houses were of bamboo. Some people used shaded hammocks for *siesta*, especially in hot, sunny weather. Along some ways were cocoa trees, botanically *Theobroma cacao*, whose big fruit pods turned from flexible green to brittle brown. One derived cocoa powder and chocolate from the seeds.

At night, many people slept on rollable handwoven mats called *baníg*. The colourful mats consisted of the leaves of the buri palm, pandan, or seagrass.

A memorable time was when we kids played with earthworms after a heavy rain. We put them in metal cans of water and pretended to boil them. Tropical biology was fun for kids...

Marble games, locally known as *jolens*, was popular amongst the children of Ibaan. At one school yard, I annoyed an older boy when he was playing a game of marbles all by himself. Many kids also liked all sorts of rubberband tricks.

The horse-drawn carriage, locally known as the *kalesa*, was still a popular means of transportation. There were still fewer fossil-fuelled jeepneys and tricycles, which decades later would litter the streets everywhere. And decades later, there would be a few stray, malnourished mongrel dogs littering the streets in order to avert outsiders...

In the "Good Ol' Days," our juvenile reading diet consisted plentifully of American-style comics. Therefrom I developed a liking for sci-fi because many comics dealt colourfully with hypothetical worlds with bizarre surroundings and strange beings. One story dealt with a visiting Earthling who wandered into a "ghost town" in the middle of the Martian desert. In more regular comics, there were superheroes like the Green Lantern and the Incredible Hulk.

Moma...

:: At :: Tita Bella'z :: bungalow waz an old frij, huz dor handol waz a sors ov slait elektrokushon wen samwan opend it. Mai kozins :: Eileen, Myra, Eric, :: maiself, en mai brader :: Gary :: wud hold handz in a lain az an elektrik shok traveld tru aur bodiz. Wi laft, bat wi did nat nou da deinjer den...

Behaind :: Tita Bella'z :: wer pigz en chickenz. Neiboring hausez wer interkonekted bai open patweiz, laik a labirint. Der waz a tol TV antena, several meterz tol, dat in da bakyard stud, laik da :: Eiffel :: Tawer. Dekeidz leiter, dat landmark wud bi torn daun apon mai vizit after a long taim biing in Kanada. :: Tita Bella :: en oder taunsfok wud diskorij mi from ritering tu da Filipinz. (Dei wud "nid" mi in da oder said ov dis world.)

Mai granpa Lolo Mak lernd a bit ov French in hiz yut.
Perhaps, da TV antena waz supozd tu bi hiz Aifel Tawer...

Dekeidz leiter, nat onli wud da tawer bi torn daun, bat da ::
makopa :: triz, wich ai mach admaird, wud bi kat daun ander
da order ov mai onkol Tito Boy. Da houl famili simd tu
anderstand mai personaliti en mai wants iven dou ai waz a
veri kwaiet person wen ai waz among dem en had bin living in
Kanada for a long taim... ::

In the 1970's, near Tita Bella's house was a dessert shop
wherein we kids ate *halo-halò*, a delicious refreshment made
of shaved ice and milk, mixed with boiled red mung beans
(*munggó*), kidney beans, garbanzos, sugar palm fruit
(*kaong*), coconut sport (*makapunô*), sugar-caramelized
plantains (*sabá*), jackfruit (*langkâ*), star apple (*kaymito*),
pounded dried rice (*pinipig*), corn (*maís*), tapioca or sago,
coconut jelly (*nata de coco*), and purplish "water yam" (*ube*)
or sweet potato (*kamote*). Sometimes, one added ice cream
and sugar...

(According to Amy Besa and Romy Dorotan's *Memories of
Philippine Kitchens*, the origin of *halo-halò*, which translated
to "mix-mix," was the simple *mongo con hielo*—boiled mung
beans, milk, sugar, and shaved ice—sold by Japanese-owned
soda shops in Naga, Camarines Sur, Philippines, even before
World War II.)

Moma...

:: Ai waz sirkumsaizd wen ai waz 7 yirz old. Waz probabli in
Ibaan or sam provinshal pleis autsaid ov Manila. Suraunding
da opereishon teibol wer several doktorz, inkluding mai

grampa, Lolo Mak. Dei geiv mi anesthesia, bat ai did fil sam pein bikoze ai bit vishusli on Lolo Mak's finger. At da end ov da opereishon, mai penis had wait bandij on it. Deiz leiter, Lolo Mak, in hiz klinik in hiz Ibaan haus, wud rimuv da bandij, put sam wait pauder on it, den perhaps ribandij it. Waz tru dat most Filipinoz wer sirkumsaizd... ::

When it was not vacation time, it was, of course, time for *real* school. I went to a private, Roman Catholic school called "La Salle Green Hills" in Mandaluyong, Metropolitan Manila. It was some distance from my house and required waking up early in the wee hours of the morning to catch the school bus. The school had a gymnasium shaped like a big, grey, domed saucer. And there were wide soccer fields. We students wore uniforms: short-sleeved, white collared shirts and khaki shorts for grade school, khaki long pants for high school. We students referred to one another by the family name, as seen on the shirt name tag. The classes were big, maybe 40 or more students each. When we switched rooms, we all lined up like we were in the army. There was order. There was a decent library system with a full set of books on *The Adventures of Tintin*, my favourite then. There was a stationery store, which sold varicoloured, phosphorescent erasers that had a strong, alluring fragrance. My favourite erasers were green and purple. The bus ride upon returning home was often fun, as we stopped by a vendor of *bola-bola*, fried fish balls in sauce. Yum! That time was in the 1970's.

Field trips from school were always fun. One time, we visited a big orphanage on a little island; Roman Catholic nuns administered it. Another time, we visited the then new Cultural Center of the Philippines, one of the pet projects of Imelda Marcos, the First Lady. We visited several zoos and

museums. The Ayala Museum boasted some interesting *dioramas*, history-depicting, three-dimensional scenes in miniature. My favourite of all trips was that of Nayong Pilipino, which was a cultural microcosm of the Philippine Islands; it showcased a mock-up village of traditional *nipa* huts and other marvels. For souvenirs, I bought dried up starfishes and exotic seashells.

As in most Philippine schools, our student body was multiracial, although most students at that young age were not "racially conscious." There were all shades of skin colour and many varieties of facial features. There were light-skinned Spaniards and Americans. There were Chinese-looking students and Malay-looking students. Many had a light tan colour. Some had very dark skin. I suppose that most everyone was not racially pure. Teachers inculcated students in thinking that the Philippines was a "brown country" and that the colour of Filipinos was *kayumanggi* or brown. That paradigm simplified everything.

There were, in fact, at least a couple of people from one of my classes who had brownish hair, whilst most others were black-haired. Just like many of the others, these brown-haired boys were *mestizos*. One of them seemed like a very rich kid, one of whose parents was probably American or Spanish or some other European, like German. Indeed, his light-skinned face, though handsome, had Frankenstein-like features. He was, on the whole, bigger than average. His house was very near the campus, right in posh Mandaluyong. At some lunch hours, he would take one of his classmates to go swimming there. He spoke Tagalog naturally like everyone else.

The other brown-haired kid sat in front of me. He was rather

chubby and was very light-skinned with rosy cheeks. His hair, slightly orange, was somewhat bristly. His hair was evidently lice-infested, which was common in the tropics. One had to acquire special shampoo to eliminate them. His speech was somewhat effeminate, but he was very friendly.

Our class subjects often required us to move from one classroom to another in rotation. We had Religion class, wherein the teacher taught us simple things like how to pray with the Rosary and the geography of Israel. We had Social Studies class, wherein we used Tagalog-language textbooks that described in detail all the native tribes throughout the country. We had Pilipino class to learn specifically Tagalog. In English class, we had SRA or "Silent Reading Activity," which was an individual-oriented reading program; there was a cart full of colour-coded plastic-laminated cards of text and each student propelled himself to the next colour level, getting ever higher on the learning pyramid. We had Science class, wherein we memorized biological terminology; I would remember words like 'stamen', 'stigma', and 'pistil' as parts of plants. Were the Science class textbooks also in Tagalog? I vaguely remember, but they seemed to be. The spoken medium of instruction for all the classes was essentially Taglish, *code-switching* betwixt Tagalog and English, because practically no student would understand straight spoken English. All my teachers were Filipinos, except for one blonde Art teacher who had a British accent and could only communicate in English. In Art class, one of our projects was to draw ourselves in our future occupation; I drew a scientist in a chemical laboratory since I wanted to become some kind of scientist. Additionally, we had Handwriting class to learn a specific script called Palmer Style; the teacher obliged us to spend many minutes in each class continuously scribbling the

same strokes and patterns in an exercise book. During Physical Education class, we played basketball inside the big domed saucer and soccer outside on the dusty fields.

I had asthma as a child. Perhaps, the cause was from air pollution, or was from some kind of pollen in the air, or was psychological. In Physical Education, the teacher knew that I had the ailment, so I could not run around excessively. The teacher took my marks from some other student who looked like me. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, I would get an asthmatic attack, and my parents would bring me to the clinic, somewhere in Metro Manila, of my pediatrician Resty Cabigao in order to give me a suppository.

In school, I joined Cub Scouts for a short time. We had to make paper lanterns for a colourful lantern festival.

I would remember a few surnames as classmates and bus mates from La Salle: Alonzo, Bautista, Santos, Villadolid, Fortuno, Mabilog, Basilao... In Grade 4 or thereabouts, my best friend was Alonzo. He had straight black hair, which stood up on top of his head. He was not too pale. He looked like he had some Chinese or Malay features, but was more European. He had bushy eyebrows and had slightly darkish halos around the eyes that made him reminiscent of an Egyptian. He was neither skinny nor fat.

Villadolid looked very Spanish. He was on the skinny side and had a triangular, light-skinned, olive-complexioned face with very black, wavy hair. His teeth, though, were small and imperfect, with braces. I would remember that his home was a majestic mansion. His full name was aristocratically very long: Julio Mariano Andrés Bonifacio Villadolid y Gallegos.

He had an elder brother with a similarly long name and was the classmate of my brother Fernando.

Santos was a handsome, short *mestizo*, a palish more European-looking person with a bit of Malay; his hair was light brown. Bautista and Mabilog were more of what Filipinos called *chinitos* because of not too dark skin and eyes tending to slant. The two Fortuno brothers had very dark skin and had straight black hair and looked very Malay; their family hailed from the Ilocos region up north. Basilao was a husky guy, looking very Chinese-Malay and looking mature for his age.

In the Philippines, the terms *mestizo* and *chinito* were ambiguous multiracial terms applied respectively to those looking more European and to those looking more Chinese; however, there was the Tagalog term *mestisong Intsik* (Chinese *mestizo*) which meant very much the same as *chinito*. By presumption, if one were not *mestizo* or *chinito*, then one most likely looked very Malay and dark. In Tagalog, one refers to such a person nonchalantly as "Maitím siyá" (He or she is dark). In the Philippines, unlike in places like Singapore, the word 'Malay' was not commonly used. Indeed, the presumed race for Filipinos seemed to be Malay. When in Tagalog one said, "Mas mukháng Pilipino ka!" (You look more Filipino!), it meant that basically the person looked Malay.

In the parlance of traditional anthropology, many Filipinos were, in fact, triracial, mixtures of the whitish Caucasoid, the yellowish Mongoloid, and the blackish Australoid. The Malays were Southern Mongoloids, really Mongoloids with past Australoid infusion. The Chinese were Northern Mongoloids. Most of the Caucasoids who landed on the islands were of the

Mediterranean variety. For centuries, Spanish galleons traversed the Pacific to and from Acapulco, Mexico. It was part of a wider global network of sea lanes controlled by the Spaniards.

At lunchbreak in school, I usually preferred to eat by myself. My packed lunch at many times consisted of rice and some meat like Filipino *tapa*, *tocino*, or *longaniza*, but sometimes small fried fishes called *dilis*. Then I would go to the old playground where actually few kids played. My favourite personal game was pretending that there was flowing hot lava all around and underneath, then I would hop around the ledges to avoid it. Nearby on some occasions, I could hear the high school students play the Basque game of *jai alai*, claimed to be "the fastest game on Earth" because of the speed of the ball volleyed betwixt longish wicker baskets.

My mind was full of fantasies then. For instance, I imagined glowing, white mushroom-like plants with disk-like tops, inspired by the white edible pieces which priests served during Holy Communion. I thought at some point that these pieces were of coconut meat or *buko* as we called it. But in reality, these flat disks were bread-like and made of flour.

Since Grade 1, the highly fantastical and silly Dr. Seuss series of books greatly influenced me. I conjured up many strange animals and plants in strange worlds.

After school hours, my brother and I often stopped by my Auntie Mila's house at Kamias Street in Quezon City to play with my cousins of the Ferrer family. It was an ancient mansion that was once a foreign embassy. Workers supposedly moved it brick by brick from an outlying province

into the city. Auntie Mila was a person attuned to Philippine native culture. She liked all these handmade wooden and shell native crafts. On the other hand, her husband, my Uncle Joe, was very pro-American and inculcated their kids in the English language early on because they intended on later emigrating to the USA. I thought to myself that it was unusual that these cousins spoke English at home as if they were actors on television. But they did speak Tagalog with us. Uncle Joe was from a province, Pangasinan, where Tagalog was a second language; there, people spoke the language Pangasinan amongst themselves.

Esperanto...

Ĉe la malantaŭa korto de la Domo Kamias, ion magian mi atestis. Tie apud la ligna vagonsvingilo estis eble nekonata familio, inkluzive de avino kaj infanoj kaj aliaj membroj. Mi staris apud ili, ĉirkaŭantaj unu malgrandan verdan planton sur la bruna grundo. Antaŭ niaj okuloj, la planto ekkreskis kaj kreskis pli alten. Estis magie. Poste, mi kuris al la antaŭa korto por priparoli tion kun mia kuzo Jojo.

One time at House Kamias, sitting on the cool floor of Gothic coloured tiles, I along with my cousins watched on television an interesting, memorable sci-fi movie called *Planet Earth* (1974). It starred John Saxon as Dylan Hunt, a handsome white man with very dark brown, almost black hair. In the story, Dylan awoke from suspended animation in a post-apocalyptic future, and there he found that one of the cultures on Earth was female-dominated. Their women's culture called men "Dinks" and enslaved them. The worthwhile movie was a response to the 1970's Feminist Movement, also known as the Women's Movement, Women's Liberation, or Women's Lib...

At House Kamias, my Auntie Mila often would have her maid serve us kids each a cool glass of Tang orange juice and a plate of fried bananas for the midday snack, which Filipinos called *meryenda*.

One time, Chuchì, the youngest of my cousins at House Kamias cried and cried. Auntie Mila scolded her in English, "You are not a baby anymore..." Their pseudo-Americanized lifestyle was unusual, I thought.

Living independently upstairs at House Kamias was the family of the cousins of my Ferrer cousins. There were Bobong, Jackie, Bopeep, et cetera. Everyone who knew Bobong knew that he was gay. Overt homosexuality in the Philippines was not uncommon and often entailed learning a particular speech pattern and a peculiar body language. Everyone knew Bobong as extremely intelligent. Jackie, as a little toddler, I would remember, because he bit me on the arm. Bopeep was a peppy and slim girl. All of them were light-complexioned *mestizos*.

Sometimes, my family would visit the factory of my paternal grandparents, whom we affectionately called Daddy Pito and Mommy Lydia. It was on Tangke Street. It was a factory for making handicrafts out of wood, coconut shells, fibres, and seashells. They made statuettes, handbags, letter openers, furniture, and all sorts of things. There were perhaps at least a score of workers. Their customers included Europeans abroad. In the factory compound sat the house of my grandparents. It was mostly of unpainted cement and it had an atrium in the middle, under which plants grew in an indoor courtyard.

In some weekends, we visited close family friends, the De Guía family. There were the daughter Joy and the son Jojò. Jojò was very imaginative; one time, he made a spaceship-type *diorama* out of a shoe box. One humid, hot summer night, my brother Fernando, Jojò, and I threw big live snails at one another. The specimens were from the garden. Poor snails!

My family often attended children's parties within the Manila area. Very memorable was when we kids would play with blocks of "dry ice" or frozen carbon dioxide from ice cream containers. We put them on water and they would fizz, emitting seemingly magical white mists and clouds.

In other weekends in Manila, my family often went on outings to restaurants. There were posh ones like The Italian Village, serving, for us, exotic Italian, and even French, fare, and there was the fancy restaurant called Brothers, where the waiters had shaved heads like Jesuit monks and dressed in brown, monk robes. There was Max's Chicken, serving a special, local-style, roasted chicken; a large, roomy cage of many colourful parrots was part of the peaceful ambiance. There were many restaurants that served American food, which for us then, was quasi-exotic. There was the Tropical Hut, serving hamburgers. At the JUSMAG compound (Joint US Military Assistant Group to the Republic of the Philippines), there was a kind of club-restaurant favoured by my father, the Elvis fan, because of the good steaks and real American food. But there was not yet McDonald's then there, but A&W was. That time was in the 1970's.

We often visited parks. There was a wide, grassy park where

very large dragonflies abounded. They flew slow enough to be caught by the wings. I did the cruel, boyish naughtiness and tied a dragonfly about its neck in order to fly it like a kite. Another time, we went to see a mushroom farm where there were rows and rows of soiled hay wherein the mushrooms grew. Near the mushroom farm was a treehouse park. Several big trees had bamboo and wooden houses on top of them. Bamboo stairs led up to them. They were like jungle hotel suites.

Sometimes, my family escaped the hurly-burly city. One time, we visited Baguio, up north in the mountains, where the climate was cooler. There, we had the rare taste of locally grown strawberries and blueberries, a welcome break from mangoes, avocados, bananas, *lanzones* (*Lansium domesticum*), *atis* (*Annona squamosa*), *langkâ* (*Artocarpus heteropyllus*), and other tropical fruits to which we were more accustomed. Mountain tribespeople lived in the area of Baguio. Special ethnic weavings of multicoloured fabric and patterned baskets abounded. The famous rice terraces were nearby. In Baguio was also the Crystal Cave where I saw for the first time the icicle-like 'stalactites' and 'stalagmites' which I learnt from school.

And on another occasion, we spent some time in the middle of a lily-filled lake, on a thatch-roofed bamboo hut on stilts. There, we fished. An eerie, morning mist hovered over the water. On other occasions, we went to coconut-treed, seaside beaches, of which there were plenty. On one memorable beach excursion, I put a little crab inside a jellyfish that looked like a shiny piece of liver, then threw the lot back into the glittering sea. It was a harmless experiment. That time was in the 1970's.

During the festive days of December, there was an exhibit on top of the COD department store building in Cubao, Quezon City. It displayed animated robots depicting a religious scene. Thousands watched in awe.

By the middle of the 1970's, my father was deciding for us to immigrate abroad. He was looking over brochures about Canada and Australia. I would remember that I took one of his brochures of Australia. It was a little mauve booklet with the Australian map on it. I was fascinated by the geographical shape of that country, like a big jelly bean. But the decision was for Canada.

Just a few days before my family left the country, robbers infiltrated our house at night and stole all the silverware. They left some coffee cups on the dining room table to show that they even had time for some coffee. Possibly, it was an inside job...

In 1976, we flew out of the country. It was my first airplane ride. The airline was Egypt Air. We had a stopover in the airport in Tōkyō where we visited a wonderful toy store full of exotic toys, on the boxes of which were interesting writings which I could not read. The toys looked exciting. But my father said that we would not purchase any toy. "Just wait till we get to Canada," he said in Tagalog. I would later find that the toys in Canada were less exciting.



The Canadian Wilderness

We arrived in Canada on the 16th of June of the year 1976. We

settled in an island-suburb called Richmond, south of the big city Vancouver on Canada's West Coast. I was age 10, Grade 5, and I attended public school there. I would remember my first friends then—Stanley Chu and Danny Kube. Stanley was a reddish-cheeked Cantonese-Canadian who was very artistic and imaginative, like a young Stanley Kubrik in the making. Danny was a chubby Austrian-Canadian who was a great enthusiast of World War I; he claimed that more people died in World War I than in World War II. There was also freckle-faced Michael Murray, an Anglo-Canadian, who always boasted about England and everything English. Angelo Capadouca, on the other hand, was a Greek-Canadian, who much later legally changed his first name to 'Shaun' because he did not like 'Angelo'.

There were some memorable events from that school, James McKinney Elementary. Through the window, Danny and I saw a couple of dogs mating outside the school. A crowd of students watched. That time was when Danny introduced me to the English slang four-letter "F" word for copulation. One windy day, it seemed that all of us kids, perhaps a hundred, were flying variously coloured kites on the green, grassy school field.

There was a nice set of books about Canadian geography, paleontology, and such. The enticing pages were nice, clean, and glossy with colourful maps and illustrations. The impressive set was called *The Illustrated Natural History of Canada*, published in 1970.

My teacher was Mrs. L. McNulty. My Grade 5 class shared half of a big room with a Grade 6 class, ruled by Mr. Kliman.

One time, my class had to write a book report and each student had to choose a group which corresponded to a specific book. Trying to persuade me to do the same, my friend Stanley Chu joined the group for *The Secret World of Og* (1961) by Pierre Berton. But I thought that the title was too childish; therefore, I joined the group for *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) by C.S. Lewis. Stanley's "Og" would stick in my imagination for a long time until my adult years. I would create my imaginary language Vling in the year 2003.

Being a kid, I noticed how different the snack foods in Canada were compared to those in the Philippines. They seemed plastic and very artificial. They were "acquired taste." I missed the Philippine desserts like *espasol*, *polvorón*, *ube*, *nata de coco*, *gulaman*, and so forth. But soon enough, I was drinking artificial-tasting Tahiti Treat, and gobbling plastic-like licorice Twists and Pop Rocks like any other kid.

I also noticed that the atmosphere outside felt as if nature left the air-conditioning always turned on. Also, it seemed that people were more scarce.

One day, my father and I stopped by a Chinese grocery. As I walked along one aisle of vegetables, I pierced a head of lettuce with my right index finger. The Chinese lady grocer said to my father, "You have to buy that!" My father said, "No! He is just playing..." The Chinese lady responded, "Okay!"

Esperanto...

Pli malfrue, Riĉmondo kaj ĝenerale Kanado ŝajnis al mi, kiel parto de Alasko pro malmultaj homoj kaj pro la malvarmo.

In the neighbourhood where my family initially lodged were Filipino kids, all highly Westernized and spoke only English since they presumably were born in Canada. They were Jayjay, Chechè (Sherrine), Trixie, and Dindin of the Martín family. Also, there were Jerome, Claire, and Jeffrey of the Jimeno family. We all tried to stay clear of trouble.

There were other kids in the neighbourhood. The two brown Filipino Magcalas brothers at the other side of the block often played drums so loud that everyone outside could hear them. I suspected that they too were born in Canada. Two Japanesque Eurasian sisters lived on the block. One of their parents was Japanese and the other was white. The girls' hair was somewhat brownish and their skin palish. My parents adored their general cuteness. Two blacks, a brother and a sister, lived in the area as well. They played ping-pong in their driveway.

We lived in a cul-de-sac called Steele Court. In that place was my first sighting of snow; it was magical that early morning at 5 o'clock in the morning on the 2nd of January of the year 1977. Tita Beebsy, or Mrs. Martín, woke up my whole family to see the spectacle.

In the backyard, it was sandy with some grass. There, I played by myself with some coconut shells on the sand; I pretended that they were huts on another planet. Hot water from the laundry room inside trickled out of a vent; it created a meandering river in my extraterrestrial scenario. I already had a well-developed sci-fi mind by then. The neighbour at the back was a white woman who often looked out the window. She had an adopted Chinese daughter named Vicky

Ku, who seemed already a teenager.

I got a bicycle and learnt to ride it there. I was still a little clumsy riding it. I would remember that I was riding on the sidewalk and the tires kept swerving on the sides of the lawn of grass. In the yard, the white lady, who was with her daughter, yelled, "(Are you) doing it in purpose?" as if I were.

Sometimes with Jayjay and other kids, I explored the whole neighbourhood. There were a few lots where carpenters were constructing houses. These places became dangerous playgrounds for us kids when the workers were absent. There were also empty lots full of tall, wild weeds. There in the summer of 1976, green and brown grasshoppers, and orange and yellow slugs abounded. The suburban wildlife fascinated me...

One day in front of the house, Jayjay gave candy to my baby brother Paolo, who was sitting in his carriage. Paolo choked and turned blue in the face because the piece of candy was too hard and big. My older brother Fernando, who was but 12 years old, was also there. Luckily, my father Francisco, nicknamed Frank, then almost 39, came to the rescue. My little brother Paolo, nicknamed Popong, was only nine months old when we arrived in Canada.

My mother Belinda, nicknamed Binda, then 36, found adjustment in Canada difficult at first because she was so used to a life where there were servants to help with the chores. She had to learn cooking and such. She was disappointed for a while and wanted to go back home to the Philippines. It was homesickness. But fortunately, she did eventually adjust to the Canadian lifestyle.

I later had some good brownie friends, Johnny Castillo, Raymond Tiangco, and other kids of my parents' Filipino friends. Often with my brother Fernando, we all hiked and bicycled throughout the shrubby island-suburb.

By Grade 6, I had to move to another school, John T. Errington Elementary, in the same island-suburb because my family moved to a new house at Rideau Drive. The school was maybe more than 15 minutes away by walking. There was an area of bulldozed mounds of dirt only five minutes walking from my house; that area was soon to be a different school where Paolo would attend years later. That time, it was an impromptu playground for me and other kids. There was an improvisational race track for mountain bikes at that place, built about the mounds of dirt where red poppies grew wild in the summer. There, I pretended it was another planet. The original movie *Star Wars* had just been released. Essentially, the locale somewhat reminded me of Don José Heights.

My home address then was:

8191 Rideau Drive Richmond, B.C. Canada V7A 4M6
Telephone (604) 274-3740

Esperanto...

La unuaj mebloj, kiujn ni havis ĉe la Domo Rideau, estis sakseĝoj—«beanbags»—de diversaj koloroj. Plaĉis al mi ripozi en unu el ili, speciale en nia antaŭa balkono.

Johnny Castillo had many sisters, perhaps six. He was the only son in his family and was the youngest child. He lived in

a typical big Richmond house then. One time, I visited his room. The bed's headrest was golden chrome with curly florid designs. There was a tricoloured tiger-striped mat on the floor. Looking around the rest of the room, he asked, "Do you think that it is too feminine?" I said, "Yes." In another room was the bedroom of his sister Marisol. There was an array of books near the bed. They were books of science fiction, science fantasy, and fantasy. Johnny said that I could borrow a few. I would return them later when he asked for them back. I knew few girls that liked science fiction literature. One of the stories dealt with a fragile ecology of many trees along rivers on a different planet. I liked science fiction. One other girl who told me that she liked that genre was Bopeep, the cousin of my Ferrer cousins. She visited our House Rideau when she was a dancer for the *Bayanihan* troupe from the Philippines.

Esperanto...

La familio Castillo ofte okazigis festojn, al kiuj mia familio invitiĝis. Ekzistis multe da manĝaĵoj. Kaj multaj dancis al la diskoteka muziko de la 1970aj jaroj. Danci al tia muziko ne plaĉis al mi. Tio estis ŝajne por pliolduloj.

After dwelling in an apartment, Raymond Tiangco's family lived in an old house with vine-like character in East Vancouver. It was walking distance from PNE, the Pacific National Exhibition, which was the closest thing to Disneyland in the area. East Vancouver was very different from Richmond where my family lived. There, the trees, which lined the streets, were much older and grander. We kids played silly games.

My family was also in contact with the San José family—Tito

Lex, Tita Modie, and their son Michael. They lived in a condominium in Burnaby, near the boot-shaped modern building of B.C. Tel. Tito Lex was a Fundamentalist Christian of the Baptist sect and would be instrumental in later converting my parents to his religion. Whilst my elder brother Fernando and I were in Michael's room, and we were about ready to play with his toys, Tito Lex quietly shooed all three of us kids out, so as not to play with the toys. Tito Lex was like my maternal grandmother Lola Bebe in that way because, long ago, she did not want other kids playing with my cousin Eric's toys. Eric, incidentally, inherited all of my expensive toys—a roving brown tank, a black metal robot, an Evel Knievel motorcycle stunt toy set, a purple plastic futuristic speed car, a blue metal Tonka jeep, a plastic compass, a walkie-talkie set, a chemistry set, et cetera—as well as many books from our library, after my family had left the Philippines.

At school in Richmond, I befriended a Taiwanese-Canadian, Tom Sun. He would be my closest buddy for several years.

In Grade 6, I had a Filipino teacher, Mr. Bisnar. That year, the class had a field trip for a week in Galiano Island in B.C. We trekked under the sunny skies. We lodged in cabins. In my cabin, I roomed with Tom Sun and Shailendra Kumar, and probably the other guy was Ed Dowling. Shailendra was an East Indian from Fiji. He had long black hair and very dark, almost black, skin. On Galiano Island were lots of garden snakes, all different colours. Some of the guys collected them to bring home. Tom enjoyed himself by playing ping-pong, at which he was good. The cooks were Native Indians at the grounds. One time, they served a meal with corn and I had a stomach-ache, but most of the time, the meals were good.

I did a book report on *Intelligent Life in the Universe* by I.S. Shklovskii and Carl Sagan. My little discussion group was with Tom Sun in front of Mr. Bisnar, in the back corner of the classroom. My unclear interpretation of what I had read, with interesting graphics, was that researchers had *already* found other intelligent life beyond Earth. Mr. Bisnar asked plainly, "Is it documented?" Mr. Bisnar never attempted to speak Tagalog with me, as I was getting acclimatized to English, already then.

Desiring an extracurricular activity, I joined the school band in Grade 6. I chose the flute as my instrument because I did not like to carry a large instrument like a trombone or such. Making melody was amusing with that tube of silvery metal.

Moma...

:: Wan taim at lanch aur at a grasi said ov da skul, a braun-heird boy :: Roddy MacDonald :: from anoder klas aprocht mi en askt: "?Du yu nou hau gerlz masturbeit?" Ai sed: "!Na!" Hi replaid: "!Wid a Pepsi botol! !Iz tru!" Den, hi smaild, en wi parted... ::

It was likely in Grade 6 that I wrote a colourful essay on the Netherlands. The Dutch people's engineering capabilities to reclaim land called polders from the sea fascinated me. (It was a feat being repeated in Manila Bay when I was younger in the Philippines.) Later, I did a collage travel booklet about Israel. My parents brought me to travel agencies and there the travel agents gave me multitudinous brochures on that desert country. There was plenty of cutting and pasting...

The teacher was Mrs. Burford in Grade 7. (Sometimes, I thought "Mrs. Burnette.") Tom and I were the teacher's pets as we were the smartest in class. We were given more creative assignments. For reading, I continued my habit, which started whilst I was in the Philippines, of exploring English-language science fiction novels written in the 1950's and 1960's. In my Grade 7 class, I read *Star Beast* by Robert A. Heinlein. It was about a boy who had acquired a strange alien pet named Lummo that grew into a behemoth. There was another book that I read about giant red crabs on a desert planet. The taste of the novels written in that era was different from today.

Esperanto...

Iam, mi havis teruran akcidenton en la klasĉambro. Dum kiam mi uzis krampilon por krampi paperojn, la metala krampeto punkciis mian fingron. Mi subite vidis ekbrilan purpuraĵon antaŭ mi. Mi naŭziĝis. Kaj mi malrapide marŝis reveni al mia seĝo sen priparoli tion al iu ajn.

Dum tiu erao, oni estis blankulo aŭ, se oni estis de alia raso, oni estis nigrulo. Kelkaj blankhaŭtaj studentoj diris, inkluzive de unu bela nigrhara malalta Italiaspektanto nomita David Fakaro, ke mi estas blankulo. Ili sciis, ke mi estas miksrasa Eŭrope kaj Azie. Ili maltrankviliĝis, ke mi estis ĉiam kun tiu Ĉino, Tom Sun. Tiam, mi ne estis tro sentiva al la raspolitiko en Kanado.

In those days, between 10 to 20 percent of the classes consisted of visible minorities. These people were mostly East Indians and Chinese. This percentage would increase in the decades ahead.

In elementary school, one girl to whom I was attracted was quiet Andrea, who was a redhead. For some reason, I was naturally attracted to redheads. I imagined that they were intelligent and creative.

In Mrs. Burford's class, I learnt sculpting with clay which she fired in a kiln after my shaping and moulding. Some of the objects that I created included a bison and a green jar topped and encircled by three little birds. By that time, it was evident that I already tended towards Animism-Buddhism.

Also in Mrs. Burford's class, the students studied Ancient Egypt. I constructed a diorama of boats made of straw and miniature Egyptian people and pots from DAS Pronto, a kind of modelling clay that air-dried and did not require firing in a kiln.

Then later, we students studied Ancient Greece and had an amusing toga party.

In the winter, one day when it heavily snowed, Tom Sun and I made a city in the snow, out in the school field. We imagined it as some place on planet Krypton, from the movie *Superman*. Escarpments in the snow, we thought, were parts of the cityscape. It was great fun.

Halloween came. The trick-or-treating was fun, but at the end of night festivities, it was really scary because, whilst Tom and I were in a dark alley, someone in his teens or perhaps even in his twenties grabbed and ran off with Tom's bag of candies. Tom cried his way home. What a terrible shame it was. But foolishly, or out of shock, I did not even offer any of my candies to him. We were too shocked to even think of polite

gestures.

Strangely by high school, Tom was losing touch with reality. He stopped talking to me. He then disappeared from this world one day. Nobody knew what happened. Maybe, it was not that he was "losing touch with reality," but he was *awakening* to reality. Perhaps there was just too much pressure from school or from his parents or both.

On another tragedy, Trixie Martín, who was Jayjay's sister, unfortunately did not live too long. After my family had basically lost contact with their family, someone found her dead under or near a bridge. She was a pretty girl.

My governess-as-aunt from the Philippines, Tita Nedy, soon emigrated to Canada and started living with my family. She, my brothers, and I used to go to many excursions to city parks to admire the flora. We would go strawberry-picking and blueberry-picking in the outlying farms of Richmond. One sunny day, the 16th of August of 1977 to be exact, we overheard from the radio that Elvis Presley had died whilst we were busily picking blueberries.

Tita Nedy used to babysit these two blond kids, Lisa and Geoffrey, of the Harrison family. At their home was a swimming pool where I and my brothers went for swims and dives. On the bookshelves inside their house, one fascinating sci-fi book called *Cities in Flight* by James Blish intrigued me; it chronicled the exodus of cities from the Earth.

With me and my brothers Fernando and Paolo, Tita Nedy drove and ventured to Bedrock City near Chilliwack. It was an interesting theme park about the original *Flintstones* cartoon

series on television. There were dinosaurs and all sorts of things about cavemen.

Soon enough, my maternal grandparents, Lolo Mac and Lola Bebe, had also arrived from the Philippines to enjoy the city parks in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), alias Metro Vancouver. They especially enjoyed the botanic Park & Tilford Gardens, situated in the City of North Vancouver and established right at the compound of the Canadian Park & Tilford Distilleries Ltd. Together, we frequented also Queen Elizabeth Park, which sat atop the so-called *Little Mountain*, an extinct volcano and the highest point in the City of Vancouver at 150 m.

Lolo and Lola were to live at our house for years to come. Lolo liked watching a lot of news on television and eating pink grapefruit every morning. Lola was fond of *siesta* and liked staring out through the windows...

Tagalog...

Noóng isáng araw, bumisita ang Tita Lettie at Tito Rey sa aming bahay sa Rideau. Kasama nilá ang kaniláng anak, si Raymond at si Lilette. Tiangco ang apelyido nilá. Mas mukhá siláng Intsik, pero si Tito Rey ay medyo maputî at si Raymond ay medyo maiitim. Kung minsan, ang tawag namin kay Raymond ay Paós dahil sa boses niyá.

Gabí na at nanoód kamíng mga batà ng telebisyon. *The Man Who Fell to Earth* ang pelikulá tungkól sa isáng taong taga-ibáng-planeta, ang planetang Anthea. Siyá ay si Jerome Newton (David Bowie). Iniwanan niyá ang pamilya niyá doón para makapuntá sa ating mundó dahil sa Anthea ay

naúubúsan ng tubig. Maraming tubig sa ating Tiyera at naghanáp siyá ng paraán para dalhín sa Anthea ang tubig. Sa isáng parte, may *sex scene*. Sabi ng Tita Lettie, "Ay! Ang bastós!" Medyo naging di-tiwasáy ang mga batà.

(Noóng tumandâ na siyá, si Lilette ay nagbuntís at nanganák nang iláng beses na ang mga amá ay mga negró. Totoo iyón! Matalino siyá. Ínteresánte...)

Interlingua...

Forsan in la anno 1977, William, un amico de mi padre, nos visitava in nostre Castello Rideau. Ille restava con nos durante alicun dies. Io memora que io faceva un belle citate de brun fango con multe canales in nostre corte dorsal. William laborava in ille jardin e destrueva mi citate preciose. Il esseva lamentabile. Alias, William esseva un homine amical. William esseva un filipino con un padre irlandese. Ille se transplantava a Edmonton, Alberta.

Moma...

:: Der waz an apol tri growing in da bak ov da Animal Hospital. From aur bakyard juring da samer, wi kidz kud akses da apolz az der waz yet na fens betwin aur yard en dat ov da hospital. Da graund waz skaterd wid folen apolz, lait grin in kolor. Wi wud karv da apolz tu hav irz, aiz, maut, :: etc. :: Den wi wud hang dem wid stringz in da klozet tu drai intu Shranken Hedz...
Wi kidz wer olweiz autsaid in da samer, so dat aur skin waz braun-braun... ::



An Awkward Age

Oh yes, I would remember my gang during my high school days back in the 1980's, on quiet Lulu Island on the Fraser River, in the suburb called Richmond on the Canadian West Coast. Basically, there were the four of us: myself, Philip Yu Tan, Kenneth Meiklejohn, and Graeme Silvera. Philip was a Chinese-Filipino, who was born and raised in Canada. Kenneth was Canadian of Scottish-Russian extraction. Graeme was from a Jamaican family; he was a *mulatto*, being three-quarters white and one-quarter black. We all had eyeglasses on our teenage faces.

We went to London Junior High School and Steveston Senior High School.

Philip was a conservative, business-oriented kind of person from a highly business-oriented family that emigrated from Cebu Island in the Philippines. Aside from English, he spoke at home the Fukienese brand of Chinese, also called Hokkien or Min Nan, as his family had roots from Fujian province in China. He took both Spanish and French as language electives in school. Philip was a serious, hot-tempered man.

Kenneth was an extremely smart guy, who always competed with me and other smart dudes for top awards in the school. His poetry from English class was amazing. He had the extreme tendency to drop Anglo-Saxon words in favour of long Graeco-Latin words. His writing was like that of Buckminster Fuller, the famous eccentric inventor and mathematician. Kenneth took Russian and French classes. In Social Studies when the class was told to write up an essay on an imaginary country, he called his country Ionia; I called

mine Pacifica.

Kenneth's parents had a second home, a wooden cabin near Hope, B.C. I went there once with Kenneth and Philip. It was near a river with rocky shores. The area was full of green conifers.

Kenneth was like an Oriental white man in his behaviour and interests. He even had a stone stamp with his Chinese name. Once at his birthday in his home, his mother prepared delicious cabbage rolls and other Soviet dishes for the gang.

Graeme was our entertainment guru. Where he lived was a townhouse complex with a swimming pool. After school almost everyday, the whole gang would go to his house and play board games and video games. Our favourite board game was Risk, a map game of geopolitics whose object was to dominate the whole world. The video game set was called Atari. Graeme took Spanish class.

Supposedly, Graeme was related to Phil Collins, a famous contemporary singer in the 1980's. Graeme also had a rich Jewish uncle, his Uncle Victor, who had an impressive home with a Jacuzzi, outdoor swimming pool, and bay windows overlooking the inlet in West Vancouver. I, Graeme, Kenneth, and Philip spent part of our winter holidays there in that beautiful mansion.

Moma...

:: In Onkol Viktor'z big haus wer meni muziyum-laik pisez from hiz famili'z trips abroad, inkluding dat tu Chaina. Waz a big haus wid lats ov dekoreishonz. Der wer lats ov porno

videoz nir da TV set. Der waz a big geimz rum wid a big grin biliard teibol. :: Graeme :: en ai laikt waching porno, bat :: Kenneth :: en :: Philip :: wer tu prudish tu wach dem, wich waz a bit gerli, ai tot. Eniwei, :: Graeme'z :: onkol en ont wer veri rich en kulchurd...

At anoder okeishon at Onkol Viktor'z big haus, der waz a parti. Ai waz drest in a fansi blak T-shert wid a big, kolorful red-en-grin Japaniz mask feis on it. A Juwish wuman wid long, dark heir aprocht mi az shi held a glas ov red wain in wan hand. Shi komented on hau interesting mai T-shert waz. Der waz sam jelus filing betwin da tu ov as... ::

Back at the island-suburb, Graeme had an English-descent buddy and neighbour, Kevin Denny, who was known to be a little bit on the arrogant side, but he was a good debater and orator. His boasting about England and everything English somewhat reminded me of Michael Murray back in Grade 5. Of all of us, he had the most advanced personal computer at the time, an Apple Mac. The rest of us had Apple II's, which did not have a graphical user interface. However, the Mac did. It was Kenneth, though, who had the first personal computer amongst all of us.

Moma...

:: Simd dat :: Kenneth Meiklejohn :: en ai wer olweiz baisikling tugeder. Laik mi, hi laikt riding en waching *Star Trek* en oder saifai. Hi also laikt dat saiensfakt show :: Cosmos :: bai :: Carl Sagan. Kenneth :: waz a kwaiet man.

:: Kevin Denny :: waz slaitli dislexik. Had a difikult taim in speling Inglish wordz. Ai tink dat hi heited hiz langwij.

Samtaims, hi wor top hats en drest ap British. Laikt Rols Royses en evriting English, bat meibi nat hiz langwij...

Ol mai frendz wer nat veri relijus at ol. Wan kud ges dat perhaps ol ov dem, inkluding :: Philip Tan :: from Hispaniks long ago, had sam Juwish heritij. ?Waz biing Juwish jenetik? Ai niu from histori dat Juz in da past konverted pipol from oder relijonz tu Judeizm. ?Waz der "majik" involvd? Ai red samwer dat Krishchans did nat biliv in majik. ::

I knew other people from high school who were quite memorable, but were not really part of my gang. Taj Johal was a decent mesomorphic Indo-Canadian whom I knew since grade school; he had bushy eyebrows. Another Indo-Canadian was wisecracking, skinny Behzad Shroff; he, perhaps alluding to my East Asian features, said that I had a permanent "scowl" on my face. Bira Bindra, a tall guy, was another Indo-Canadian; he always said a friendly "Hi!" to me whenever he could. One used the term "Indo-Canadian" for a Canadian of East Indian background.

There was serious Albert Lim, a dark-skinned Chinese-looking Filipino, who often reminded me that I should act Filipino, and not Canadian. There was redheaded Robert Cocking who was a bookworm like many of us. There was smart Gary Kaufman, a husky Jewish boy. Martin Bollo was a black-haired white Chilean, also very smart.

There was also comely Phillip Hanam, a brown Malay from Singapore. He was an adopted son of Chinese parents. He said to me that Singapore was more "cosmopolitan" than Manila. In a way, he was both right and wrong. He could speak Malay and hinted that we, both speaking English, felt a

little girly. He was my buddy for a while, but he was a grade higher than I was.

Moma...

:: In hai skul, der waz a wait gerl neimd :: Kim Georgeson :: hum ai niu sins Greid 6 en 7. Shi waz a plamp gerl wid darkish braun heir. Anlaik oder Kanadian gerlz, shi laikt inishieiting da griting "!Hai!" or "!Helo!" tu mi. Der wer wait gerlz hu laikt toking tu mi indairektli bikoz dei niu ai waz shai. Tu wait gerlz, a redhed en a long-heird blond, in English klass wer toking about sam gai masturbeiting in a kar, wail ai waz siting behaind dem in kwaiet en wid mai legz krost. Den da blond wisperd in mai direkshon: "*!Iz a feg!*" Probabli, shi waz refering tu wan ov mai gang memberz... ::

There was also Andrew Wassenaar, a Dutch-Canadian who was a quiet kid and was my partner in Social Studies. Steven Van Slyke was a very smart guy, probably also Dutch-descent, but with whom I did not really interact much. There was also Tim Yesaki, a sturdy-looking Japanese, whom I knew was very smart like Steven, but with whom I also did not really interact much. Apparently back in Errington Elementary, Tim was always in a different class from me.

Moma...

:: A short, blak-heird wait kid :: Dominic Farrell :: en a short, blond hoki-fan kid :: Dave Werner ::, hum ai niu in Greid 5, wer bot gudlukiing, ai tot. Den der waz a tolisch, black-heird, blu-aid :: Danny Walker :: hu waz, ai tot, olso hansam. Had klir wait skin. Waz laikli in wan ov mai Saiens klasez. Waz on mai teibol. Spok elegant English. ::

Julie Horner, a graceful brunette, was atypical for many white Canadian girls because she liked science, specifically chemistry. Extraordinarily, she was indeed a scientist-to-be.

In high school, there was also the very chummy, brown-haired, pimple-faced white American Rob Racy, who eventually moved to the American Deep South, to Atlanta. He probably had the hairiest legs in the school. Darren Lane was a brown-haired guy, who, because others perceived me as an intellectual, shooed me away before gym class from a gang discussion on why there was pubic hair or "escutcheon" around the belly button.

Moma...

:: A fiu taimz, ai sheivd mai legz bikoze ai tot dat ai had da heiriest legz in P.E. klass. A fiu klasmeits komentet az if disapointed. Ai gest dat sam oderz had heiri legz, bat deir heir kolor waz laiter, so da heir did nat kontrast tu mach wid da skin kolor... ::

Caroline Huang was probably her name. She was a very silent Chinese girl who was my partner in Biology class, involving dissecting a frog and other critters. Another Chinese girl, Helena Mung, was my partner in Home Economics, involving baking cakes, baking apples, and other cooking. These two Chinese girls were not very Canadianized. There were, however, Canadianized Chinese girls, like Tina Lee and Angela Wong, both of whom were very smart. There was Helen Teraguchi. She did not like me hovering over her whilst she dribbled the basketball during Physical Education. She was a fat girl with a nice Japanese face. At woodwork class, I

created a book end shaped like a hand, whilst Derek Miyazaki made one with a circular hole through it. Maximiana Manhão was a Portuguese-Chinese *mestiza* from a family from Macao. She, much later in life, would marry my childhood chocolate friend Johnny Castillo.

Some of my high school classmates I knew from elementary. These people included Angelo Capadouca, Darren Lane, Maximiana Manhão, Helen Tsu, and Angela Wong.

Moma...

:: Ai niu braun-heird :: Danny Kube :: ov Austrian, *nat* Australian, heritij in Greid 5. Dat taim. wan taim, da hol klas went tu da VanDusen Botanikal Garden. Der, ai lernd about da einshent Ginkgo tri. Ai kolekted sam ov da yelowing livz. Ai pleist sam betwin peijez ov meni ov mai buks. In hai skul, ai met :: Danny Kube :: agen. Juring wan ov da riding seshonz in klas, ai tuk aut a Ginkgo lif from mai buk about horror moviz, en den glifuli showd him da draid yelow lif from VanDusen. Ai geiv him da lif. Den der waz a sad luk on hiz feis en hi krasht da lif in hiz hand. Probabli, waz sam kaind ov skitsofrenia in wich hi asoshieited da yelow kolor wid reis. Meibi, hi tot dat ai waz terning yelow. Ai did nat rili anderstand da reis politiks among mai jenereishon... ::

At Physical Education class, we students measured our back flexibility. I rated in the 97-99 percentile, which meant that I was in the top 1-3 percent of back flexibility in Canada. Whilst in the gymnasium I was measuring, my waist being on the blue mat on the floor and my upper body turned up towards the ceiling, my blond classmate Andrew Wassenaar said to me, “You look like a frog!” (The epithet “frog” was

usually reserved for French people.) I guessed much later that he meant that I looked like a Mediterranean European. People then in high school were casually throwing strange insinuations about my racial heritage because it was evident to them that I was some kind of hybrid Mediterranean and Oriental, although I was not self-conscious of it, really.

During high school, some religious people from a biblically-based "Born Again" New Religious Movement (NRM) in which my father was involved tried to indoctrinate me into their fold. They were a Filipino "Youth Group." Several times, these strangers picked me up in their automobile and we would go to a so-called "fellowship" in someone's house. They would sing strange songs without Qì and pretended they were happy. Maybe some of them were genuinely happy, but I was not. Then they would pray in English, and sometimes in Tagalog. They took turns and I did not know the standard prayer format. The adult Filipino shepherd was Mr. de Guzman, whom my little brother Paolo mistook for "The Goose Man" on the telephone.

Basically, it was an NRM first popularized in the American Deep South and now permeating the Filipino community in Canada. It was of the Baptist Christian sect. In that group, I was a friend of Michael San José, a shy Filipino-Canadian who was learning to speak Tagalog with an awkward accent. In any case, the religion was too foreign for me and they were not successful in converting me. I even went up to a so-called "retreat" in a ski chalet on snowy Mt. Baker in Washington State. There, the adult leaders, Filipinos, used a few psychological tactics to win over some of the unconverted. Richard Navarro, a handsome, short *chinito*, was my section leader. But the religion was still too foreign for me. I felt so

awkward. One strange thing at Mt. Baker was that most everyone wanted to stay inside the chalet, whilst I wanted to go outside in the snow and play.

I would remember the Filipino pastors, Catanus and Pantoja. At Mt. Baker, Pastor Catanus was lecturing us, the youngsters, about a time when he proselytized to Japanese students. In his story, one Japanese student said to Pastor Catanus, "This religion is just not for me."

In the late 1970's, the first church of my family was St. Joseph's The Worker Parish on Williams Road on Lulu Island. We were at least still nominally Roman Catholics upon arrival in Canada. When we moved to House Rideau from Steele Court, we then attended St. Paul's Parish on St. Alban's Street on Lulu Island.

In the 1980's, my parents, I, and my little brother Paolo attended services regularly at Grace International Baptist Church on Jasper Crescent in Vancouver. It was a congregation of mostly Filipinos and a few Anglo-Saxons. After the regime of Pastor Catanus, Pastor Pantoja led the congregation. At the beginning of each service, an appointed person read a Bible passage in Tagalog and English, but the following lecture was all in English. The pastors had to be linguists as well as spiritualists; their training included Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Greek, the languages of the Old and New Testaments respectively. Of course, the Greek that they learnt was a later incarnation of the Greek spoken when the Greeks still worshipped Zeus and their other numerous gods. A third language in the Bible was Aramaic, related to Hebrew; it was used sparsely in a few chapters in the Old Testament. Usually, Hebrew overlaid these few parts. It would

be really more beautiful, I thought, to read the Bible in their original languages.

By the 1990's, my parents tried another Christian sect, the Pentecostal church, to which I was privy. Pentecostals believed in "speaking in tongues," a phenomenon in which a member of the congregation during a service suddenly uttered, in a strange, unknown language, words which were of holy significance. Like Baptists, Pentecostals believed in lots of gospel music. As generally was the case amongst Protestants, these sects did not promote the art portrayal, drawn or graven, of figures of holy people. Compared to those Roman Catholic, Protestant churches were often more Spartan. Most of the congregation of the Richmond Pentecostal Church on Westminster Highway were Anglo-Saxons with a few people from other races. The men wore what looked like business attire.

One time, my family visited the church of Dan and Val Tolentino, friends of my parents. Dan was a very dark-complexioned Filipino, thin, a friendly architect who in the past had the opportunity to work in Lagos, Nigeria. Val was his wife, a Canadian brunette. An interesting thing about that part of Africa, Dan said, was that the blacks often did not build the steps upon a staircase with regularity in that every step had a different size and maybe even a different shape. The blacks there believed in more organic architecture. Anyway, my family and I visited the Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic church of the Tolentinos. The nondescript building was somewhere in the northern outskirts of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). There, we spent almost three long hours at the service wherein the mostly Anglo-Saxon congregation enthusiastically jumped and

shouted to music. I felt very uncomfortable and wished that we had left much sooner. Dan and Val had *mestizo* children, boys, who were good at Oriental martial arts.

My brother Fernando and I collected lots of comics in our teenage years. One day, he decided to bind all of our comics together and weave them together with a cardboard folder for a cover. It was thick, about 10 centimetres thick. It was like our holy relic. Fernando was sometimes very subtle...

Esperanto...

Iam mia patro estis sen laboro kaj volis trovi laboron en Usono, specife Seatlo en Vaŝintona Ŝtato. Dumsomere, tien iris li, mi, kaj mia frateto Paolo. Ni loĝis en la dometo de junulo, usona filipinano, sinjoro Gavino, kiu estis la filo de la amiko de mia patro. La najbarejo estis iom kaduka, preskaŭ pornografia.

En Seatlo, ni vizitis bazaron, kie mi aĉetis oldajn grizarĝentajn rulŝuojn. Ni vizitis la domegon de la riĉa patro de sinjoro Gavino. Ĝia malantaŭo, tra fenestrego, superrigardis verdan klifon, vere arboplenan ravinon, kie ekzistis rivereto sube. Certe la najbarejo tie estis pli riĉa.

Mia patro restis en Seatlo dum iom da tempo, sed li ne povis dungiĝi kaj revenis al Kanado. Tiam estis ĝenerala ekonomia regreso tutkontinente.

Dum plifortuna alia tempo, mia familio vizitis Los-Anĝeleson en Kalifornio. Ni aŭtomobilis. Interese estis la ŝanĝiĝo de plantoj inter Oregono kaj Kalifornio. Troviĝis pli kaj pli da palmoj kaj sekaklimataj plantoj.

En Los-Anĝeleso, ni loĝis en la domo de mia onklino Virĝinia kaj ŝia familio, inkluzive de miaj gekuzoj. La domo, arkitektita de mia onklo Sonny, troviĝis sur monteto apud Holivudo. Kelkaj najbaraj domoj havis numerojn kun frakcioj kiel kun « $\frac{1}{2}$ ». Estis strange por mi. La vetero varmegis ĉe pli ol 30°C. Ni vizitis la plaĝojn, Disnejlandon, la lokan observatorion, kaj tiel plu. Ekzistis aliaj familianoj en la urbo: miaj patroliniaj geavoj kaj aliaj gekuzoj.

I had pets in my teenage years. They included several hamsters and guinea pigs. (I liked the “tribbles” in *Star Trek*.) My special guinea pig's name was Blondie. My favourite pet was a light-haired hamster named Jabberwocky, who looked like a little fuzzy teddy bear. Actually, Jabberwocky was big for a hamster. I also had aquariums with lots of fish. My favourite fish was a jet black, big-eyed, large-finned, globular goldfish. I also had a green pet Venus Flytrap.

Esperanto...

Mi ofte fantaziis pri havi kameleonojn aŭ salamandron kiel dorlotbeston. Tiuj bestoj vere intrigis min. Sed mi neniam havis la okazon.

I tried to create *bonsai*, miniaturized trees, out of avocado plants which I grew from their big seeds. Later, I found out that the best *bonsai* were from plants with very small leaves. Avocados had large leaves.

My favourite toy then was green gooey Slime, which came in a green plastic garbage can, about 10 cm high. Some versions in the toy store were purple in colour, whilst some later had rubber worms in the goo. Mattel, the toy manufacturer, made

the goo out of guar gum, extracted from the guar bean. I played with Slime as if it were a living pet. I squished it through my fingers and let it slop from one hand to the other.

My elder brother Fernando gave me a toy metallic gyroscope, which was another favourite toy of mine. It was a birthday gift and came in a clear plastic cubic box. It could spin rapidly after starting up, then it would balance itself for a long time. I kept it for a long, long time until it fell on the floor and became unbalanced.

Fernando did not really read sci-fi, but he liked watching it on television or in the movies. I read a lot of sci-fi novels. One day I was reading *Triton* by Samuel R. Delany and I showed the book to him. Then like a mean person with a grin on his face, he threw it on the floor. I was not sure why he reacted that way... Perhaps, it was the intimidating book cover. Fernando preferred reading science *fact*, but science *fiction* he reserved for watching...

In the 1980's, I visited the PNE or the Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver every summer. Every year, the PNE showcased a particular country. My favourite was the USSR. That time, I collected a stack of interesting Soviet magazines, all in Cyrillic writing. They were exhibition samples. Red was the favourite colour in these magazines. I kept them for a very long time.

During my teenage years, I landed several odd jobs. I delivered telephone books from house to house. A dangerous job it was because a German Shepherd almost bit me. I helped at the ballot boxes during a political election. I mowed and weeded lawns for other people. There was an appreciative

regular Chinese customer Stella Chen, who had a funny Cantonese accent, but I suspected that her family was from Taiwan (where one spoke Mandarin). Sometimes, she spoke tonal pidgin English: "Befoh you mow lawn, wash garage" (Before you mow the lawn, please wash the garage). From that garage, I "borrowed" a Japanese flag, the one with the Red Rays emanating from the Red Sun...

One day, Stella, her husband, and I packed a van with some old objects, maybe parts of furniture, and then we went to the gigantic city dump, hidden faraway, in order to dispose of the objects. It was then that I realized in a sleepy way that all cities in the world had large garbage dumps beside them. Our civilization was dirty...

One interesting, memorable, quiet summer job was at a marina near a hotel in the northern part of the island-suburb; there, I cleaned yachts. My co-workers there, one of which was a middle-aged blondie, drank black coffee which was too hot for the throat. I would remember that at the marina, there was a good-looking, young, white man, who later lost a leg from a bicycle-automobile collision.

By Grade 12, I risked working during school session at a fast-food chain known as Wendy's, where there was also this *Filipina*, from high school, named Caterina with whom I did not really talk. And there was a discouragingly bitchy Anglo-Saxon girl who did not like her job. Overall, it was dangerous work because sometimes I had to carry a metal tub full of oil from one place to another. The Anglo-Saxon manager, who was not unfriendly, said once to me, "We are not communicating..." Who, I wondered, was that "we"? I was an inefficient hamburger-maker, so that brown-haired,

moustached manager sent me out in the garden outside to weed. That job was complimentarily easier and made my skin browner under the sunshine. The bleak atmosphere at that workplace inside, though, did not induce a good psychological mood for outstanding grades. I won more top awards in Grade 11, than in Grade 12.

Esperanto...

Mi prenis miajn unuajn Komputilajn Studojn en la 9a kaj 10a gradoj sub sinjorino Topping. Mi lernis la komputilan lingvon BASIC. Por ĉiu programo, mi devis uzi kartaron. La instruistino sendis la kartaron al la centra komputilego, aliloken en la urbeto. Poste, la rezultoj revenis al la lernejo. Estis malfacile.

Unu el miaj plej favorataj instruistoj en mezlernejo eble estis sinjorino M. Lowery en mia klaso pri la Franca lingvo en la 8a kaj 9a kaj 10a gradoj. Ŝi estis tre ĝentila blondulino.

Alia blonda instruistino estis kurta sinjorino J. Inkster en Gitaro 8. Dum praktikaj ekzamenoj, mi estis tre nerveze ludanta gitaron antaŭ ŝi.

Mi prenis Ĵurnalismon en la 9a grado sub sinjoro K. Lorenz. En tiu klaso troviĝis Philip Yu Tan kaj Kenneth Meiklejohn. Ni ĝuis verki.

Sinjoro P. Erickson, kiu estis nigrahara blankhaŭtulo kun granda barbo, estis mia instruisto pri matematikoj en la 8a kaj 9a gradoj. Al mi, li aspektis kiel ferakonta karaktero.

Mi studis Elektron 9 kaj 10 sub sinjoro Jay More. Tie mi lernis fari elektraĵajn cirkvitojn.

I had several Japanese teachers in high school. There was Ms. C. Sakata in Social Studies 8 (and Typing). She was really curious about my assignment on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in that the country had four levels of government. There was Ms. C. Nitta in English 9. She kept and took home some of my assignments as mementos. There was Mr. T. Kagetsu in Algebra 11, Algebra 11 Honours, and Algebra 12 Advanced. Now, those were tough courses.

In English 9 at Ms. Nitta's class, I presented a report about George Lucas' film *THX 1138*, wherein a future super-hygienic society relied on prescriptive drugs to maintain peace and order. Not taking drugs was considered a crime called "drug evasion." Anyway, Ms. Nitta started a discussion on it. I was neutral to the whole idea. The class was quiet, maybe a bit stunned.

Another time in Ms. Nitta's class, there was a discussion on the very popular television miniseries *Shōgun*. One of the white "smart alec" students tried to correct her pronunciation of the Japanese word by rhyming it with the English word 'gun'. Ms. Nitta, somewhat irked, retorted by rhyming the word closer to 'goon'. Well, Ms. Nitta was a Japanese woman.

There were plenty of "smart alecs" around the school. One was Melvin Hanky, who was as fat as a beluga and had dark brown hair. He always sat at the back of the class as he shouted wisecracks at everyone.

I think that my most imaginative class was with Mr. R. Forbes in History 9. A moustached gentleman with brown-streaked blond hair, Mr. Forbes inculcated the class in creative games

like world domination and colonization simulations, in which each table in class was a different country at odds with others. There was also a major project in which each student had to make up and write about an imaginary country. I really liked that. My country was called Pacifica.

Esperanto...

Mia instruistino por Arto 8 estis la longhara blondulino, sinjorino Barrette. En la supro de la bretaro en la klasĉambro, troviĝis la timiga argila skulptaĵo de la kalva kapo de oldulo kun multaj sulkoj sur lia vizaĝo. Fernando, mia fratego, skulptis ĝin antaŭ kelkaj jaroj en la sama klaso. Sinjorino Barrette, kiel multaj mezlernejaj instruistoj ekde la 8a grado, kelkfoje komparis min al Fernando, kiun ili probable taksis pli inteligenta ol mi, sed mi vere ne sciis. Sinjorino Barrette havis Britan akĉenton. La skulptaĵo de oldulo probable simbolis, por Fernando, la oldecon de tiu akĉento, aŭ probable de io tute alia, ekzemple de Kanado ĝenerale, sed mi vere ne sciis.

Blonda bela sinjoro Carroll estis mia instruisto en Scienco 9. Iam li larĝe malfermis siajn okulojn antaŭ mi.

Sinjoro Hemmerich, kiu estis blonda instruisto en Scienco 10, estis tre laŭmoda viro. Li estis inter la plej unuaj vesti sin en «rugbeaj pantalonoj».

Mr. McBride, a brown-haired man with a moustache, was my teacher for Physical Education 8. He said that my wavy hair was like "Brillo Pad," which was a kind of scouring pad. P.E. was difficult with eyeglasses on my face. I was thinking of taking a course with chemistry in post-secondary education. But perhaps in high school, I should

have taken the hint of my Chemistry 11 teacher, Mr. D. Fisher, who was a short, brown-haired man with a British accent. Although I did extremely well in chemistry then, grade A, my essays in that subject gave him the idea that I was more of an artist. He hinted that I should not pursue the subject. But anyway, computer analyses of my aptitudes and skills in high school counselling indicated that I was suitable to a scientific or most any technical occupation, including engineering, and perhaps medicine. I did get 93% in Mr. B. Barnes' Biology 11 class in high school, which was the top mark in that class, but I was not listening to the voice inside me. In Mr. P. Ramírez' Chemistry 12 class, I got a B because of the final examination results. He told me that I should think about taking Spanish, which I intended to do in university.

Esperanto...

Mi supozis, ke sinjoro Ramírez iom rememorigis min, ke mi ne ŝatis la instrulingvon en la klaso. Tio afekcios mian progreson en la universitato. La Angla lingvo estis iom ĥaosa laŭ mi. Mi eble preferis studi la Hispanan anstataŭ Kemion.

I got an A in Mr. R. Gregory's Computer Science 11 class. His black hair and beard made him look like Count Dracula. We used Apple II machines in class.

I really liked the English 11 class of Ms. F. Raber, a black-haired Jewish woman with a secure, almost manly voice. In that class, I learnt a lot about *existentialist* philosophy. I wrote really good essays which I should have kept because existentialism was really difficult to understand. But I more enjoyed Mrs. E. Dalby's French 11 class in which we sang Champs-Élysées and other traditional French songs, and we

even sang songs in Caribbean French Creole, which was not really French at all. Mrs. Dalby sadly died of cancer when I was still attending that school.

My staple for reading pleasure in my teenage years was science fiction and fantasy. Books such as *Ringworld* by Larry Niven, *Imperial Earth* by Arthur C. Clark and *Triton* by Samuel R. Delany influenced me. In my mind, I travelled throughout the Solar System, to the rest of the galaxy, and beyond. I explored controversial subjects such as race, age, sex, and politics in those many novels. I felt as though that I lived through them.

Esperanto...

Hejme en Riĉmondo, mi ofte biciklis al parkoj kaj al la riverbordo. Tiujn lokojn mi imagis kiel scenojn en la giganta *Ringmondo* de Larry Niven. Ĝi estis giganta rubandeska strukturo ĉirkaŭ suno. Ĉe la interna flanko, troviĝis landoj kun arbaroj kaj kun dezertoj, ankaŭ maroj, oceanoj, kaj riveroj. Tiu arkitektura mirindaĵo estis kreita de granda antikva civilizacio.

Kelkfoje dum la 1980aj jaroj, mia familio vizitis mian onklon Ed, kiu estis pli juna frato de mia patrino, kaj onklinon Evelyn, lian edzinon, apud Portland en Oregonŝtato en Usono. Ni aŭtomobilis tien el Kanado. Onklo Ed ŝatis ludi golfon kaj li ne ŝatis alkoholaĵojn. Ambaŭ geonkloj ŝatis vetludi en kazinoj. Ili intence ne havis infanojn. Oregono estis vere verda arboplana loko kaj havis relative malmulte da loĝantoj. Interesa loko apud Portland estis religia groto kun ĝardeno kaj statuoj sur monto. Oni devis veturi per lifto por atingi tien. Miaj geonkloj havis grandan domon sur monteto.

Tiuj lokoj ĉirkaŭ Portland estis ja montecaj. La endomaj plantoj de mia onklino estis strangaj. Ili estis polpoaspektaj eksterteraspektaj vitoj elfluantaj la dikajn arĝentajn cilindrojn. Mi ofte rigardis viglajn kolorplenajn rokmuzikvideojn televide el la fama Usona kanalo MTV. Tiam rokmuzikvideoj estis nova koncepto. Ili ŝajnis kiel hajkoj miaopinie. Eksterdome estis bona najbarejo kun monta vidaĵo. La ĝardeno ne havis multe da gazono ĉar plejparto da ĝi estis kovrita de brunaj arboŝeĵetoj. La ĉirkaŭa aero estis freŝa kaj pura.

Dum miaj mezlernejaj jaroj, mia plej favorata filmo estis *Blade Runner*, kiu temis pri la futuro, en kiu troviĝis mondo plena da altgrada teknologio, specife artefaritaj personoj. Estis intriga romanco inter la viro Deckard, la stelulo Harrison Ford, kaj la artefarita virino Rachael, la stelulino Sean Young, nigrahara belulino, kiu rememorigis min pri mia kuzino Myra. La filmo aspektis iom Japaneska. Mi diris al mi, ke iam mi iros al Japanujo...



Life on Campus

Meanwhile my gang from high school played many games... And time passed. We graduated in 1984. We eventually found ourselves in the most prestigious provincial university, the University of British Columbia.

Kevin Denny did not take a language elective in high school. He ended up in another university that did not require a second language.

University life was a struggle to keep the gang together. We

had all taken drastically different educational paths. But we tried. We carpooled together.

In 1986, the World Exposition was at Vancouver. I had an interview, but I was not accepted; however, Philip Yu Tan was hired. But in the summer of that year, I got a job at Vancouver's Pacific National Exhibition, the PNE. I was a table-wiper in a beer garden. I enjoyed it. There were a few perverts there. At lunch, I would eat a large serving of strawberry waffles with whipped cream in the food court.

One time at the washroom of the beer garden, there was a young, darkly brown-haired man who was urinating in the urinals. He boasted how big his penis was to an older white man, also urinating, beside him. The old man left, saying, "And your father was Charlie the horse..." Then, the young white man quickly glimpsed at me as I was squeezing a squeegee or a wet rag...

Later, I obtained a good part-time job in a suburban mall as a money-changer in a spooky video game arcade, owned by a Swede, Mr. Ragnar Nilsson. And that time was when old gang friendships started drooping. There was jealousy at all corners. But we still tried to keep together. As a last hurrah for the gang, three of us, myself, Philip Yu Tan, and Ken Meiklejohn, in 1987, vacationed in Hong Kong, then in the Philippines, specifically in Luzon Island and Cebu Island. It was great fun: eating mangoes, having siesta, walking on the beach, ballroom-dancing, going bowling, river-rafting in the rapids, doing all the sight-seeing, talking with relatives, and window-shopping.

In Hong Kong, we spent time in a huge high-rise apartment of

Philip's relatives; it took up most of the whole floor. Philip's relatives, a boy and a girl, both our age, studied Japanese as it seemed popular amongst the young crowd there. One night, the girl and I went shopping together amongst the festive city lights and I bought many cheap wrist-watches, whilst the other guys, including Philip and Kenneth, played basketball, which I thought was a waste of valuable time in a foreign place. She gave me a small box full of porcelain cats and kittens. In their apartment was a *Filipina* maid who did all the cooking.

In Luzon, we stayed in Metropolitan Manila; there, I sojourned at Auntie Vicky's and we visited Auntie Mila. We dined in Uncle Joe's favourite exclusive club and then we watched traditional dances with the dancers in full native costume. In Cebu, we stayed at the family estate of Philip's relatives; there was a factory that made dried mangoes there. The owners were kind, gentle, and cultured. They had a bireligious shrine to worship both the Buddha and the Santo Niño. There was a Daoist temple on top of a mountain on that island. Then back in Luzon, I separately went to Quezon City, Metropolitan Manila, to sojourn at Auntie Mila's. Together with my Uncle Joe, Auntie Mila, and cousin, I went to Pagsanjan, in which there were a jungle river and waterfall, for river-rafting on a wooden, bamboo boat. We got all soaked, including my camera. Pagsanjan was the location for the old movie *Apocalypse Now*, which was about the Vietnam War. Then I went off to Ibaan in Batangas province to visit Tita Bella and other relatives. In Batangas, Tita Bella, my cousins, and I had a beach excursion to the little Lugpô Island. Whilst all those happenings, Philip and Kenneth went to some other island, probably Bohol Island.

As the last leg of our trip, I, Philip, and Kenneth stopped over in Narita Airport near Tōkyō, Japan. We then took a day-trip to Akihabara, the electronics district of Tōkyō. It was actually my first time in Japan that went beyond the airport.

During all that vacation time, Graeme Silvera had gone to visit his native Jamaica.

Later in university, my gang from high school had begun to separate and make new connections. And it was a new life for all of us.

In Chemical Engineering classes, I was a friend of David Ho, a Hong Kong Chinese, who eventually switched to Economics and ended up in Real Estate as a career. In those engineering classes, I also knew Michael Meszaros, a pimple-faced Hungarian-Canadian who was a religious proselytizer. Another was a carpool buddy, Goffrey Gosonhing, a big Chinese-Filipino whom I knew from high school English 11 class.

David Ho had a strange Cantonese accent. His English syntax reflected his Chineseness. For example, he would describe "a person wearing a blue jacket" as simply "blue jacket guy." Someone in several of our Chemical Engineering classes had the surname Ng. David told me how to pronounce it. It was all a pure nasal without any vowel. I said, "That's not a word!" He turned to other Chinese classmates and said, "He is making fun of it!" Then one of them said to me, "You look like an Indian..." I was not sure if he meant "East Indian" or "Native Indian."

David often wanted my advice on English grammar. He found

it to be a difficult language.

David lived in an impressive family home which was of the Tudor style in the wealthy Shaughnessy area in Vancouver. He had many brothers and sisters. He was the first to introduce me to an IBM PC, which I thought at first was a strange machine because I was so accustomed to Apple machines. The family had a white, long-haired, roundish cat with bright blue eyes. Its name was something like "Mou-mou."

Esperanto...

Mia unuajara universitata Anglalingva kurso, «English 100», estis interesa. Mi havis junan blankhaŭtan profesorinon, brunharan, sed preskaŭ blondharan. En unu el miaj eseoj, mi uzis kelkajn vortojn, ne tro ekzotikajn, kiel «goodliness» kaj aliajn, pri kiuj ŝi indikis sur mian paperon, ke ili ne ekzistis en la lingvo. Poste, mi skribis citojn el kelkaj vortaroj pri ilia ekzisto kaj donis al ŝi. Eble ŝi surpriziĝis. Ŝi legis al la studentoj oldajn romanojn, kiel unu libron de la Polo, Joseph Conrad. Tiuj estis tro longaj kaj enuigaj, ke mi legis nur la ĉefajn partojn. La studentoj verkis multe. Unu el miaj eseoj traktis Bizancan perspektivon de la Kristana religio, kio estis interese. Unu sunbrilan tagon, la profesorino decidis marŝi kun mi laŭ la arboplena ĉefa avenuo de la universitato. Pri tio, mi pensis iom stranga...

In my high school English classes, I had the highest grades of all the students. Amazingly, I did not pass the ECT, the English Composition Test, in university the first time. I had to retake it and passed the second time. My guess was that my writing sounded too foreign and unconventional to the

marker, or that my surname sounded very non-English, or that maybe I was just too nervous and I liked to take my own sweet time to write anything. Goffrey Gosonhing reported this event to Ms. F. Raber, my favourite English teacher, on a visit to our high school. They knew that I was like a foreigner...

In university, there was also another interesting fellow, Pham, who was from Vietnam. He always carried a yellowish canvas bag. He had a funny accent and seemed a very intelligent student in my Chemical Engineering classes. I did not know why, but Philip Yu Tan was wary of him...

Esperanto...

Baldaŭ, Philip Yu Tan havis novan amikinon Viviana kun oranĝe tinkturita hararo. Ŝi, Ĉinino, estis lia unua reala amantino.

At the UBC Aquatic Centre, Kenneth Meiklejohn, Philip Yu Tan, and I tried some dangerous stunts. We all took turns diving into the swimming pool below from a very, very high diving board, which must have been several metres from the ground. Looking down was very scary. It was Philip who coaxed the other two of us into this crazy peril. Much later, I heard that Philip would try skydiving from an airplane. That rumour was from Behzad Shroff, who also tried it.

Khalid Al-Skait was a handsome "sheik" from Saudi Arabia. In and out of UBC, he became a good friend of mine. One day, we spontaneously decided to hike up Black Tusk Mountain, whilst he had leather shoes on. It must have been still spring season because once we made it all the way to much higher elevations, there was still snow on the ground. Khalid lived in

an apartment near the planetarium at Vanier Park in Vancouver.

Esperanto...

Iam, en unu el miaj laboratoriaj klasoj en Kemia Inĝenierarto, ni studentoj eksperimentis. Laboratoria asistentino, kiu estis Mandaren-parolanta alta svelta longhara Ĉinino, diris al mi, «Pensu!». Mia vizaĝo eble montris tro da kalmo antaŭ tiu averto, kvazaŭ mi meditis. Kaj la aliaj studentoj ŝajnis ekscitataj tiam.

I did take Chemical Engineering, but I really wanted to take Bio-resource Engineering, which dealt with anything combining engineering and biology, such as fish-farming, artificial body parts, hydroponics, et cetera. The course was looked down upon by other engineering students who thought it was the easiest course amongst all the engineering courses, including Engineering Physics, Electronic Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and others. Most thought that Engineering Physics was the most difficult. It was too bad because Bio-resource Engineering was really interesting and there was much camaraderie in that group. They had a little barn-like clubhouse all to themselves.

Esperanto...

Unu bio-inĝeniera studento estis Vuk, kiu estis nigrahara blankhaŭta belulo. Li estis amikema. Mi kelkfoje renkontis lin en la Akva Centro. Li ŝatis uzi la saŭnon.

My friend David Ho started out in Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania, then transferred to UBC. Telling me how

good it was at Carnegie Mellon, he persistently criticized UBC, but I was not sure of the objectivity of his statements.

I, later, switched to Computer Science in UBC. My grades were not outstanding in Chemical Engineering because during examination time, a fire partially destroyed my home. It was December of 1985... My parent's friends, Charlie Ang and his wife, were visiting my family then. His wife accidentally put a live cigarette into the wastebasket in one of the bedrooms. Charlie was a strange man, a Chinese-Filipino, with a business selling antiques like wooden cherubim. Whilst I was studying for examinations, he distracted me about bizarre occult matters, affairs of magic and the supernatural...

Subsequently, I took a French course from Langara College. I did it all remotely without an instructor. It was all self-study and the actual study time for it was minimal, so it freed up my schedule for studying my other courses at UBC. I went to Langara College just for the few examinations. I then transferred the credits to UBC. I also took Assembly Language, a low-level computer language, from Langara College, but it was not to my liking. Assembly Language was more difficult than higher-level computer languages, I thought, especially if it involved an old mainframe system.

Back at UBC, in Computer Science, I fraternized with Steve Kwong and Glen Lee, who were both Hongkongese-Canadians whose home language was Cantonese. Steve was an ice hockey player and a fan of the Japanesque; he studied both Japanese and Mandarin as language electives. Glen was a chubby, gentle guy, who was adept at badminton and liked the French language.

Glen and I had a mutual friend, Lance Colins, who was a tall, slim black from the Caribbean and had impressive, advanced mathematical abilities. He often haunted the ancient, ivy-covered math buildings on campus and befriended eccentric math professors. I sometimes ate lunch with Lance at the University Village where there was a comfortable well-established Chinese restaurant. It was peculiar that he often could not finish his large serving of chow mein. He mentioned to me more than once that he thought that it was peculiar that many East Indians wanted to look like Italians or that they changed their names to sound Italian. That comment probably had a subliminal message...

There was a Japanese professor named Dr. Kanda at Computer Science. He always seemed to look as if he were drowsy. Lance mentioned, perhaps jokingly, that the professor might have been under the influence of drugs. A few times, Dr. Kanda wrote *Kanji* on the blackboard as a sort of joke. Perhaps, only Chinese students could at least partially read it. Dr. Kanda's class involved very difficult mathematics related to Computer Science.

One time, there were visiting industrialists from Japan. They talked about Japan's Fifth Generation Computer Systems project in front of some students and professors. The visitors seemed somewhat secretive.

Esperanto...

Mi havis multajn profesorojn en Komputila Scienco en UBC. Doktorino Moyra Ditchfield, mia instruistino pri la komputila lingvo Pascal, rememorigis min pri Ripley, la stelulino Sigourney Weaver, kiu estis la forta alta protagonisto en la

sciencfikcia filmserio *Alien*. En UBC, Doktoro David Poole estis bela viro el Aŭstralio. Li instruis pri la komputila lingvo Lisp uzata en esploroj pri Artefarita Inteligenteco.

Karim Badrudin Dewsi was my friend who was an Ishmaili East Indian from East Africa. We did some assignments together. One time whilst we were having lunch together in a classroom, two Cantonese students were talking too loud to each other in their native tongue. Karim shouted at them in order to silence them. That classroom was almost empty except for us. Perhaps the sound of their language was not to Karim's liking, or else he was jealous of their language, or else they were plainly talking too loud.

Grace Al-Khoury was a Lebanese girl with whom I also did assignments. She asked me things like how does one say "Thank you" in Japanese.

Glen had a buddy, Michael Sam, a Hongkongese-Canadian who was a real dwarf. I got angry at Michael because he did not seem to take his share of the workload for one of our projects. I thought that my altercation with him irritated Glen. Anyway, Steve, Glen, and I became my new core gang in university. We did all our major projects together on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Computer-gaming. It was tough, but it was fun. I learnt many higher-level computer languages, including Lisp, Pascal, Modula-2, FORTRAN, Prolog, and C. Our machines were IBM PC compatibles, Apple Macintoshes, UNIX workstations, and the campus mainframe.

Esperanto...

Steve kaj mi havis Indoneziajn geamikojn, ĝentilajn gefratojn

Susana kaj Marcel Sutanto. Ili estis palhaŭtaj kaj Ĉinaspektaj. Marcel estis en la fako de Komputila Scienco. Mi, Marcel, kaj Steve ofte ekzercis en la ekzercejo apud la universitata naĝejo. Ambaŭ Marcel kaj Susana havis fortan ŝtonan akĉenton kiam ili parolis Angle.

All through our UBC days, my elder brother and I timeshared a brand-new, small, Korean automobile, a yellow Hyundai Pony, which my parents financed. It was an economical vehicle. That time, the Korean automobile industry was still at its infancy.

I had some interesting university summer jobs, which required very minimal supervision. I credited these part-time jobs partly to jolly Dr. Vince Manis, a rotund black-haired white man, who was part of the selection committee. One summer, I worked for a Vietnamese professor, Dr. Son Vuong. He had a shaved head and looked like a Buddhist monk in a suit. The job entailed a special computer communications language, called Estelle; I continued the work previously done by Isaac Chan, a Hongkongese-Canadian, who would reappear during my later career.

Another summer, I worked for an East Indian professor on parallel computing and multiprocessors. It was a difficult undertaking. The professor's name was Dr. Clarence de Silva. I wondered why it was that he had a Latinate name. Perhaps, he was from Goa in India. He was an East Indian, definitely.

Esperanto...

Kiam mi laboris por Doktoro de Silva, mi uzis grandan ĉambron en la Konstruaĵo de Mekanika Inĝenierarto. Tie

troviĝis ankaŭ mia amikema kunulo, pli aĝa Ĉino, Mandaren-parolanto, certe el Ĉinujo mem. Li nomis sin Jimmy C. Yang de la Laboratorio de Industria Aŭtomatigo de la Departamento de Mekanika Inĝenierarto. Dum mia esploro, mi legis paperojn, inkluzive de tiuj, kiuj havis Japanajojn pri robotoj.

Dum someroj, mi ofte vizitis la urbocentron en Vankuvero per la flava Hyundai Pony. Tie mi esploris la librovendejojn, ĉefe sur la strato Granville, kie estis plene da pornografio. Iam mi forgesis ŝlosis la aŭtomobilon kune kun la ŝlosiloj ene de tiu. Mi iris al librovendejo. Poste, mi revenis al la aŭtomobilo. Subite mi ekkonstatis. Mi devis voki teknikiston por malfermi la pordon per speciala ilo. Malfeliĉe, tiu brunhara blankulo preterpagigis min.

Fojfoje, mi vizitis la straton Robson, la ŝikan distrikton kun multaj alilandaj restoracioj, galanterioj, kaj vendejoj. Tiam ekzistis multekosta altgrada desertejo *Le Milieu*.

Dum kelkaj varmegaj tagoj, mi provis nudismon sur la plaĝo Wreck apud la universitato. Estis tre liberiga sperto.

Wreck Beach during the lazy days of summer was full of nudists. Only relatively healthy people could reach it as the forested paths going steeply down to the sands were quite treacherous. At the sands, one might see a wandering, handsome, tanned nudist selling cans of beer. Between the logs on the hot sands, nudists would be lying on their towels. A heat wave would distort the field of view as if the air were crinkling. Some nudists could not help to express their sexuality in the bushes...

When it was not summer, in university, I obtained part-time work shelving books in the ancient Main Library, which looked like a stone castle. That time was a relaxing job.

I enjoyed life in the university campus where there was a mishmash of different architectural styles from different periods. I used to hike all over the place. I haunted the libraries: Sedgewick, Main, Biomedical, and Math. I was fond of the postmodern Asian Library where I could peruse especially box-wrapped Japanese books, odd-looking books with Indic scripts, and Indonesian science texts. A few times, I visited the Museum of Anthropology and the Japanese Gardens. I trekked along nudist Wreck Beach where there were old garrisons from World War II. I sometimes ate at the Student Union Building, the SUB, where there was a video game arcade in the basement. But usually for lunch, I would find a secluded place to eat, like an empty engineering draughting classroom or an empty math room with old wooden chairs or one of the empty high-ceiling rooms of the airy Old Computer Science building. I often munched on giant cinnamon rolls or Chinese pork buns and curried beef buns. The Aquatic Centre was where I often waded and swam in the shallow parts of the swimming pool; I pretended that I was a manta ray. I relaxed in the bubbling Jacuzzi and in the steamy sauna there.

Moma...

:: Wan taim in da Akwatik Senter, a yang wait man expozd himself neiked in da shalow pul. Den in da men'z shawer rum anoder taim, a yang Chainiz man had a konspikiuwus erekshon wail oder neiked men wer shawering. In diz pleisez, men had tu lern tu kontrol deir erekshonz. Samtaimz, ai did

nat wer kontakt lensez, so wan taim ai enterd da wimin'z
shower rum bai misteik. Da yuniversiti waz ful ov yang pipol...
::

There was a museum in the lobby of the modernistic Geology building. I had rare occasions going to the remote Law building and the ancient-looking, Victorian-era-style Theological building. The 1960's-looking cubistic Buchanan buildings were where many of my Art (Humanities) classes were held.

Moma...

:: Ai ofen went tu da Saund Laibreri ov :: Sedgewick :: Laibreri in UBC. In der wer meni lisening buts wid hedfons. Meni ov da rekord disks tu wich ai lisend delt wid experimental en etnik miuzik or powetri, inkluding rekordingz ov :: Nahuatl :: or Aztek verses. Der wer sam elektronik miuzik az wel. ::

My favourite subjects in UBC included my Artificial Intelligence courses, which involved creating games and "expert systems" using interesting and beautiful computer languages such as Prolog and Lisp. I also liked my human language courses in Spanish and Japanese. For Spanish, my professor was a stubby, black-haired, almond-skinned Peruvian, Dr. Antonio Urello, who, I imagine, might have had some Incan blood; he was perhaps a mestizo and not a pure Spaniard. He told the class that his fellow-countrymen roasted cavies as delicacies back in Peru. I initially learnt to speak Spanish with a South American accent. In Japanese class, my professor was Dr. Kramer, a funny white, brown-haired American who had for some time lived in Japan and had a love-hate relationship with his adopted language. His

teaching assistant was also a white man, who had long blond hair; being the son of a missionary, he grew up in Japan. (His name was something like "Brent.") He had mastered even Japanese body language, like different kinds of bows for all occasions...

I found in the stacks of the ancient Main Library some plays and such written long ago in Esperanto. I only considered them a curiosity at the time. The idea of an artificial language created a century ago intrigued me. My interest in artificial languages continued since my high school days when, in the Richmond Public Library, I discovered a captivating Esperanto comic strip in *Heavy Metal* magazine; it depicted soldiers speaking the language. Also from the same place, there was a book called *Teach Yourself Esperanto*. I told myself that someday I would really try to learn that language. In UBC, I found other intriguing constructed languages, including BABM, pronounced /bɔ.ʔɑ:.bɔ.mu/, created by a Japanese man, Rikichi (Fuishiki) Okamoto (1885/1963). He first published a book about the language in 1962.

I graduated from university in 1989. Sometimes, I wish I had gone further to graduate study.

Being curiouser, I started taking extracurricular sport and art classes in the community to expand my horizons. I took a creativity class of combined poetry, sketching, and martial arts in Richmond. Then I took tennis lessons in Richmond. There, I met this peppy girl from Ireland, Deborah Manning, who stayed over in Canada as a nanny. She had a funny accent. She had dark reddish brown hair. Evidently, she was looking for a soulmate. She was not too successful in her short stay and eventually went back to Ireland. She hinted that I

was more interested in "Eastern ladies" when she noticed my stares at Chinese women on the tennis courts. There was this matchmaker East Indian lady Tara Sammy from Trinidad who liaised betwixt the two of us. One time, Deborah winsomely told me that I had a "violent streak" and she was correct. After tennis lessons, I took an eight-week, two-days-a-week Cantonese language class in Vancouver at a time when I was fond of wearing black clothes as was the fashion then.

At that time, I had a vintage yellow Volkswagen Beetle. It was the second car that I used, but it was the first car which I bought with my own money. The brakes were not good and one time I almost died; there was a close collision near a bridge.

Esperanto...

Dum miaj universitataj jaroj kaj post ili, la favorita restoracio de mia familio estis Estía, kiu estis bona Greka restoracio en Vankuvero. Tie troviĝis granda bufedo. Ni ĝuis.

In a university bookstore, I could find exotic books on various subjects, like deep mathematics, microbiology, etc., which I could not find anywhere else then. The very informative Web was not yet born, a thing of the future, but the Internet already had existed since the 1960's, as we students used electronic mail linked to the then Internet in the 1980's.



Old Gastown

After university, I landed a good flextime job in a software company, situated on a major tourist attraction, on a brick-

laden street in the city of Vancouver. It was at Gastown: the Coldwell Building, 73 Water Street. Our product was electronic mail. It was a comfy, rustic, multistoreyed office with brick walls and wooden frames. There, I befriended fellow technologists Don Chan and Frank Gee. Don was Hong Kong Chinese and spoke Cantonese and English. Frank was born in Canada and was an avid ice hockey player whose family spoke an obscure Chinese language. He could comprehend his language, but he spoke only English. Frequently, we three ate lunch out together, in the nearby mall or in Chinatown. Unrestrained, we discussed everything under the sun...

Frank liked strip joints, and he often coaxed Don and I to join him at the Number 5 Orange Strip Club, downtown. The nightlife in Vancouver was mirthless compared to other cities in the world, nevertheless. At the Orange, we watched mostly white women undress on stage. We three drank alcohol, of which I was not fond. Anyway, I usually ordered a bottle of California Cooler. Don and Frank were fond of white women and fantasized a lot about them. They asked me what I thought about these women, and I said to them that they seemed like "mothers." Frank was very North American in his perspective about life. He often made blunt and rude statements. He was very materialistic. He was the least Asian in mentality of us three. But he was rich, and shared a house with his brothers. He owned a fancy sports car, an ultramodern motorcycle, a widescreen television, amongst other things. But he was actually of a quiet personality, most of the time. His family was very supportive in that despite having his own house, he would drive to Mom and Pop to eat dinner.

I was still exploring my sexuality, and I knew that, essentially, most people really were bisexual, or at least, had the potential to be bisexual, but that realization was not common. I, by myself, a few times, ventured into gay strip joints. I was surprised that some women attended, even Oriental women...

I lost my virginity to a *woman* on the 11th of July in the year 1992, to an Oriental, of unknown ethnicity, with the Japanese pseudonym Kyomi. She had long, black hair. Her telephone number was 874-8586. The action took place at 210-2150 Brunswick Street, near the Kingsgate Mall in Vancouver. I paid 130 Canadian Dollars. She told me that I "should find a girlfriend." That sweaty midday occasion would not be, for me, the end of paid expensive heterosexual encounters...

The woman of my dreams was someone who was intelligent and creative. The race, or skin colour, really did not matter. Amongst whites, though, I liked black, blonde, and red hair. Because I am a short man, she would have to be short in height as well. I preferred that the woman would not speak English to me, but another language in which I had some capacity. Indeed, language and culture were important to me. That dream woman would remain illusive and elusive, however...

Esperanto...

Unu el miaj plej favorataj filmoj ĉiam estis *THX 1138* de George Lucas. En tiu spirita prifutura filmo, spegulante min estis la karaktero THX 1138, la stelulo Robert Duvall. Lia samĉambranino estis LUH 3417, la stelulino Maggie McOmie, spegulante mian tenisan amikinon Deborah Manning. Spegulante mian officejan amikon Don Chan estis SEN 5241,

la stelulo Donald Pleasence, kiu en la rakonto estis komputilisto, kiu volis anstataŭigi LUH-on, kiel la samĉambrano de THX 1138. Spegulante mian universitatan amikon Lance Colins estis SRT, la stelulo Don Pedro Colley, kiu en la rakonto estis nigra komediisto en holografiaj dissendadoj. Ĉiuj estis kalvaj kaj vestis sin blanke. LUH 3417 havis ruĝan lanugaron sur sia kapo. Budaismo estis Hindua sekto...

In the office at Gastown, there were others, mostly programmers, who were not very close to me, yet had left a lasting impression on me. Detlef Grundmann was a sensitive, tall, brown-haired white Canadian, who was married to a Chinese woman and always listened to Cantonese, Vietnamese, and other East Asian music on his disk player. William Schuurman was a tall, black-haired man who looked Jewish; he was the leader of the team engineering the Windows version of the electronic mail application. Don Howes was a short, brown-haired man who always watched his stocks in the market. This trio, Detlef, William, and Don, formed the core Windows team. Peter Smith was a quiet, doubting Anglo-Canadian intellectual, who was an early house-owner. Steve Louie was a very arrogant, very Westernized, Hongkongese-Canadian, who seemed to have overcorrected the cliché that Chinese men were quiet and shy. He was a very nitty-gritty technical person, who owned a red sports car, a Mazda RX-7.

Moma...

:: Dat :: Steve Louie :: had an interesting perspektiv about kulchur. Hi ofen forwarded mi imeil in Spanish. Hi tot dat ai shud embreis da Kaukasoid said ov mai multireishal heritij az

hi implaid dat da West waz superior. Az mach leiter in mai laif ai wud also riyalaiz, Oriental kulchur waz tu inhibiting tu wan'z personaliti. Hi waz rait. ::

There was Grant Watson, a tall, thin Frankenstein, who was somewhat of a hippy. Shannon Chan was an adept software writer, a Hongkongese-Canadian from an impressively wealthy family who lived in a big house on a high slope of West Vancouver. Kokwai Chan was a stocky Chinese from Malaysia; he had a funny Malaysian accent. Isaac Chan, whom I met in UBC, was now in charge of the SMTP Gateway. Wilbur Fong was a shy Hongkongese-Canadian programmer pawn. Tony Cheng and Duncan Lee were aggressive, manager-type Hongkongese-Canadians. Edward Zhang was in charge of the FAX Gateway and Xiao was an expert on Windows graphics; these two were from Mandarin-speaking Mainland China. Kathleen Hulst, a girl programmer in charge of the MCI Gateway, was of Dutch descent: a tall, brunette giantess from a small town in the prairies, from the province of Alberta. Rod Martens, another adept programmer, was a wisecracking German-Canadian sandy blond with a moustache; he was also from the prairies, from the province of Manitoba. He preferred to refer to his ancestry as Mennonite and not "German." Malcolm Pearson was the company boy wizard pet. Peter Gron was a handsome, dark-haired white man who got the prized X.400 project and was fortunate to be temporarily stationed in Paris, France, as a technical liaison.

One time whilst in the brick-walled, timber-framed office, I, Rod Martens, and Don Chan were sitting by our desks. We chatted and it seemed that Don Chan was rather depressed. Rod Martens, who knew some intuitive psychology,

understood Don Chan's real problem. To him, Rod firmly said, "Just do it! Just do it!" Rod meant that Don should just masturbate as a regular activity for health reasons.

There were many other people in the office. Patrick Black, with glasses, was a redheaded, bearded Anglo-Canadian manager, who was not too chubby. Rick Cheyne was an Anglo-Canadian "family man" manager, who became my direct manager, whose manager in turn was Patrick Black. Rick Cheyne was a stocky man with glasses and was slightly balding with dark, brown hair. Black-haired, white-skinned, stocky in build, and short in stature, Mark Ledsome was a wisecracking Anglo-Canadian career climber, who liked constricting the direction of conversations. Mark had an East Indian girlfriend. Mark's ancestors were English Jews. Brian Bray was a very fat, whale-like Anglo-Canadian manager with dark brown hair. There was rumour that he had a boyfriend. There were also the so-called "BH Boys" who worked on an alien project for Big Blue IBM. They included Gordon Brown the leader, Chuck, Robert Zanatta, William Creelman, and others. There were also the so-called "Mac Guys" who worked on special Apple Mac machines. They included Tim Snider the leader, James the white cat, Ian Wijesinghe, and others. Ian claimed that his surname should be pronounced as "Wijjuh-singer" because many Anglophones could not properly pronounce it.

William Creelman was a strange character, a bicycling white man who showed an interest in Oriental culture. One time, he used the word "orientate" during a discussion, but I said that there was no such word because the right verb was "to orient." Later, I looked up the word and was surprised that "to orientate" was indeed synonymous with "to orient."

The BH Boys regularly ate in Chinatown for lunch and called the experience "greasy Chinese." Indeed, Cantonese food was often greasy...

Jim the Korean was in sales and promoted a Korean version of the product. He was said to have married a white woman who was a model. There was also Anne Coulomb, a memorable blonde Québécoise who was in charge of sales in Francophone Canada; she promoted a French version. Chris Mah was in technical support; he, married to a *Filipina*, was an ex-programmer who was always on the telephone as he answered calls from concerned customers. There was also energetic, girlish Michelle or Marlene or Marylène Petit, who was another French-Canadian; her hair was long and brown. There was also Toula, who was a mocha-toned Greek-Canadian. They both worked in office supplies and did other duties. The receptionist was Gwen, a busty blonde lady who liked a lot of noise and action.

In the office, I was the software writer of a particular pre-Windows electronic mail component in which I enabled coloured text messages. I was also the Internationalization Liaison of the major product line. Concurrently, I initiated and lead the next-generation electronic mail project *Godzilla*, which I later passed on to another developer, Tony Cheng.

Jack Grushcow, a short, black-haired, bearded Jewish man, owned the whole company, Consumers Software Incorporated. His wife was often also in the building, as well as his little long-haired dog, who ran around the premises. Perhaps it was 1989 or 1990 that the company held the best Christmas party at the Aquarium in Stanley Park. We finely

dined in a dimly lit lounge with several tables surrounded by big beautiful aquariums. One of my co-workers, shy, moustached Brian Eliason, in his 30's, was all to himself that night as he was reading a complex computer book; he was rather oblivious to the people chatting around the table. In my opinion, it was a wonderful company Christmas party.

Around this time, a new automobile had become suddenly affordable. I bought myself a brand-new, black, 1990 Acura Integra LS with a stick shift. It had no rear spoiler as I preferred. I enjoyed driving it, being smooth and stealthy on the road. I sold my yellow Beetle to Don Chan. I think now that maybe I could have bought stocks instead of buying a car because the market was good then, but the commuting was far because I lived in the island-suburb, whilst the workplace was near downtown. There was no SkyTrain then.

Esperanto...

Dum la plifruaj 1990aj jaroj, mia aŭtomobilo estis nigra Acura Integra LS de la jaro 1990. Ĝi ne havis malantaŭan aerodinamikilon pro mia prefero. Ĝi havis arĝentajn radkovrilojn. Ĝi ne havis la arĝentan insignon de Acura sur la metala ĉasio. Tiu insigno aperis en la venonta jaro sur tiu modelo. En la modelo de la jaro 1990, nur la arĝentajn vortojn «ACURA» kaj «INTEGRA LS» aperis malantaŭe. Estis pli simple. Sed mi ŝatis la venontan insignon.

The office was, for the most part, tranquil. Sitting at my desk in front of the computer, I would have my headphones on as I listened to quiet music like that of dreamy Enya. The view through the windows showed the harbour, old buildings, and cargo railcars on railroads. Sometimes at lunch hour, I would

browse the second-hand bookstores and antique shops in the area.

I often ventured into "porn shops" for fun. In one of them, whilst I was browsing, the East Indian lady vendor asked, "What do you want? Girl-Boy? Boy-Boy?" To evade the question, I just said that I had no money then to spend... At the darkly lit Peep Shows were rows of booths for viewing sex films. Between some booths were impromptu holes by which some men would commit illicit sex. There was a smell of bleach and sperm.

About this time, I habitually wore a vintage grey German *Bundeswehr* jacket. The emblem of the *Bundeswehr*, or German armed forces, was on the right shoulder.

Esperanto...

Kelkfoje, kelkaj ni kunlaborantoj ekskursis al Norda Vankuvero por rajdi ĉevalojn. Estis amuze kaj estis miaj unuaj lecionoj lerni ĉevalrajdadon. Estis granda bieno sur verda arboplena montaro. Iam mia ĉevalo estis tro fortika kaj obstina, ke mi malfacile kontrolis ĝin. Ho ve! Mi memoras, ke nia grupo inkluzivis de Tim Snider, Steve Louie, Frank Gee, kaj aliaj.

In December of 1991 and January of 1992, I spent my holidays in Egypt. It was the best and most magical Christmas and New Year's in my memory. I, along with a small tour group from Adventures Abroad, travelled from Cairo down along the Nile by train and buses to visit ancient temple ruins. We reached far south to Abu Simbel near the Sudanese border.

In September of 1992, with my friend Frank Gee, I went to Cancún, Mexico, to a Club Med resort. There, we snorkled, scuba-dived, sailed, water-skied, and did other things in the warm, azure waters of the Caribbean Sea. We saw a nest of hatching turtle eggs on the white sandy beach. There were luscious buffets, in which at one time I tried frog legs. There were pretty girls, of whom the memorable ones were a Japanese named Mini-san and a multilingual Swiss German named Gizella. Gizella went wild one night as she danced on the festive sandy beach to loud music. The place was full of West Europeans, many French. We also took excursions to see ancient Mayan temple ruins, along the coast by bus and into the jungle by small airplane. Chichén Itzá was a temple site to behold.

The old Gastown office was like a strange dream. The surroundings were like an old town. The music of Enya played for a long time. I remembered the brick walls, the wooden frames and columns, and the views of the mountains, water, and train tracks.



A Japanese Dream

Back in Canada, an American megacorporation called Microsoft from Washington State eventually bought out our medium-sized company. Things started to roll. They moved the office to a bigger, modern building with gold-glazed windows on 888 Dunsmuir Street in Downtown Vancouver.

Several people quit or were laid off before the move. Microsoft preferred workers who seemed proactive and productive. Grant Watson, the tall, gangly, brown-haired, bespectacled

hippy was one of those who quit. On his last day at work, he broadcasted to everyone a strange e-mail which described company people and organizations as amoebae which divided and coalesced wildly and continuously. Patrick Black, the redheaded, bespectacled engineering manager, also quit. Some people looked up to his leadership and would be sadly missed.

From the USA came a medium-height, stocky, grey-haired, bearded, bespectacled, Jewish-looking man named Tom Evslin, who became the top manager of the whole Vancouver subsidiary. He was tough both in e-mail and in person.

I became the Engineering Lead for the Japanese electronic mail project *Banzai* with the black-haired, moustached, not too skinny American David Irwin as Program Manager. Subordinate engineers were skinny, brown-haired Patrick Jennings and handsome, brown-haired, mesomorphic Jonathan Morrison, just average Anglo-Canadians who became also my friends.

Moma...

:: Wud meik mi saund gei dat ai waz indid in lav wid :: Jonathan Morrison, :: hu waz slaitli toler en kronolojikali yanger dan mi. Hiz feis glowd samwat redish on hiz chiks. Hi waz kyut en had a kyut personaliti, bat ai niu dat hi waz a big man. Waz :: Brian Bray'z :: aidiya tu rekrut dis yang man intu mai grup. :: Jonathan, :: ai spekiuleited, waz an "oral sex" gai bikoz hi laikt saking lolipop aiskrim... ::

The manager of all the program managers, including David Irwin, was a sexy, tall, grey-haired, moustached American

named Mark Jennings (who had no familial relation to Patrick Jennings). It was Mark Jennings who initially made me think seriously about transferring to Japan by prompting me with questions.

There were several Americans, besides Mark Jennings and David Irwin, who transferred to our subsidiary in Vancouver from the headquarters (HQ) at Redmond, Washington. One of them was a very energetic, short brunette named Jeannie Schmidt. She was a software tester at HQ, but became a program manager in Vancouver as a promotion. She was really overloaded with work, though. Another American was Barry More, a big, stout, brown-haired, moustached man, who became the manager of all the software testers in the Vancouver office. One time, our subsidiary had a barbecue party in a grassy park under sunshine. He was the one cooking all the hamburgers. But it seemed that when it was my turn to get a hamburger, he was a little hesitant to serve. Perhaps, he was a little jealous or embarrassed.

There was an immigrant named Andrew from Australia. He, a software tester, usually kept to himself. His boss, Robert Vogt, who was a middle manager amongst the software testers, was upset when I made the allusion of Andrew to Ozzy Osbourne on the RAID system, our bug-tracking networked software. Ozzy Osbourne, a then popular British Heavy Metal celebrity, was famous for grabbing a dove and biting its head off whilst he was intoxicated. My joke was the pun on "Aussie" and "Ozzy." Well, Andrew was really a cool-headed, skinny, brown-haired man, though looking a bit bored. I several times invited him to lunches or a movie, but my mostly Oriental gang intimidated him. Anyway, he was busy dating a nurse...

One day, a black-haired, bespectacled white man named Daniel Petrie, a top executive from HQ, inspected the premises at our subsidiary in Vancouver. He looked around my office whilst I sat at my desk. He quipped that my office looked very "palatial." Indeed, it was because it was at the corner of the building with high windows. The theme was Japanesque with a large hanging woven mat as the centrepiece. Amongst the colourful decor was a transparent glass jar, inside of which was a plant growing on hydroponic gel. The flag of Japan, the Red Sun with Rays, protruded from the shelves.

Starting in 1992, I spent time in Japan and Canada, back and forth. I tolerated the jet-lag. But really, every time I was in Japan seemed like a *long*, intense vacation as if time had slowed down. I wish that the *digital camera* was available then. I saw much beauty there.

Esperanto...

Mia tiam komenca impresoj pri Japanujo estis, ke ĝi estis bela lando. El flughaveno, mi prenis modernan trajnon al la urbo. Survoje, mi vidis la verdan kamparon plene da bambuoj. Ĉirkaŭe troviĝis vastaj rizkampoj. La variaj domoj havis imponajn diverskolorajn ceramike tegolitajn tegmentojn, kiuj brilis sub la suno. Ĉio ŝajnis bonkvalita.

Mi agnoskis, ke Japanujo vere estus, por mi, lando de serendipa esplorado.

Narita Airport near Tōkyō was always an exciting place. The most interesting airports were in Asia because many of the signs were in different writing systems or scripts. At Narita, I

saw animated neon signs in Thai script, in bright orange. I could not guess what they were announcing. In the frenzy, I spotted several white men in orange monk robes; they were walking barefooted in the airport. That sight was incredible. They were probably Buddhists; if they were not, then they were probably Hare Krishnas. Whenever I waited for my flight and ate at the airport cafeteria overlooking the docking aircraft, I thought to myself that Canada was so very far away. This feeling of distance I would never forget.

I felt that Tōkyō was such a dense city, so much so that one would not see large parking lots such as in Canada. To Japanese, they were a waste of valuable space. Indeed, there were special parking machines, which lifted and piled up automobiles on top of one another. They looked like giant robots.

I was in regular contact with my Canadian team, which included Tim Snider who was a symbolic lead, Jonathan Morrison, Patrick Jennings, and others, via a geopolitical game which we played on the Internet. The object of the game was to form alliances with other countries and conquer others—a sort of wargame.

Eventually, I was given the opportunity to transfer to the Japanese subsidiary and I accepted. This was in the early 1990's. I did not know how long I was going to be abroad, so I sold my new car, the Acura Integra, to a chubby, blond Canadian co-worker, Kevin Funk. I got back most of the money that I used to purchase it.

Jeannie Schmidt told me how "romantic" I was in my decision of transferring to Japan. Yes, she was right. I was a romantic.

In Japan, my duties entailed mostly on the side of Software Engineering Development with a little emphasis on liaising with Marketing as sometimes I would go on "field work" with other employees to other competitor software companies in order to research our market. Some of the competing electronic mail products were quite impressive. The packaging itself was a sight to behold: almost neon-coloured plastic boxes that looked like they contained *candy*.

Japan's personal computer (PC) industry was unique in the world during the 1990's. Different competing domestic companies fragmented the PC hardware market with several non-IBM-compatible machines. This diversity actually hindered the domestic PC software industry. Japanese companies considered PC's at a lower end of the computer machine family. Supercomputers were at the top. Microsoft dealt only with PC software.

(Japanese actually themselves promoted some forms of diversity. Many teenagers tinted their hair different colours to reflect this tendency.)

From the start, our team only had the *Banzai* project, which was the pre-Windows version of electronic mail. But later, we added the *Shōgun* project, which was the Windows version of the product, and the *Okinawa* project, which was the advanced SMTP Gateway. "Okinawa" was the name of the subtropical islands which were located south of the major Japanese archipelago and which were famous for goat *sashimi* or raw goat meat. Okinawa had its own local language, besides Japanese, but Okinawans were also Japanese. "Okinawa" was our secret code word for the

Philippines as a sort of nostalgia.

The Tōkyō office was initially in the Shinjuku ward before its relocation to the Sasazuka district in the Shibuya ward. It was called Microsoft Kabushiki Kaisha or MSKK for short. I first befriended Robert Orndorff, a fun and funny Jewish-American from Washington State, as well as Hideyuki Inada, a tallish, sharp, darker-shade, magnanimous Japanese who was Program Manager. I liked the accent that he had when he spoke Japanese. His favourite word seemed to be 'keredomo', which meant 'however'. Inada-san and Robert combined in managing as well as in being my initial tour guides, but both quit the company too soon. It led to a crisis. Inada-san defected to a competing company, Borland in California. And Robert fled to Washington State to wed his Chinese fiancée. (I later attended his modest wedding in Seattle.) Quickly, the American headquarters had to hire Tom Hensel, an American from Washington State to replace the liaison management. All through this time sat a friend of mine, a half-American, half-Japanese sumo-wrestler-looking fellow Jeff Muzzy, who was also from Washington State. Tom was a little uneasy in Japan because of all the pressure. He had his own style of humour; he bought and rode a pink motorized scooter through the streets of Tōkyō. He flirted a lot in the Roppongi district, which was known for "party animals." Several secretly labelled him in the office as *hen na gaijin* (strange foreigner) or *etchi* (horny). They often misunderstood his free lifestyle. Tom was not alone in being labelled; Kyōko Oikawa, a young office lady, often labelled me as *abunai* (dangerous). She was hinting to me about the danger of STDs.

Esperanto...

Dum la nokto en kelkaj stratoj de Tokio, prostituado estis evidenta. La virinoj venis el multaj landoj, kiel el Tajlando, Filipinoj, kaj Sudameriko. Ili parolis kvazaŭpiĝineskan formon de la Japana ĉar ili ne estis fluaj parolantoj. Viro selektis virinon sur la malluma strato kaj ili iris al iu amorhotelo aŭ «Love Hotel» por amori dum horo aŭ pli da tempo. Oni ankaŭ banis en banujo. En kelkaj danĝeraj lokoj, se oni nur sidis kaj babilis, trinkante eble bieron, kune kun «laboranta» virino, oni devis pagi multe da mono. Sekso en Japanujo estis pli libera ol en aliaj landoj. Por Japanoj, sekso tre gravis kiel integra parto de kompleta sana vivo.

At my workplace, there was a curious fellow, a Japanese-American software writer named Arthur, who had been in Japan for several years. He preferred American values over Japanese. For instance, during a round of beer-drinking, he preferred to pour his own drink instead of the Japanese tradition of pouring someone else's drink reciprocally. Thereto Jon Genka, a Japanese-Hawaiian, giggled, stealthily disapproving. However, in a very Japanese fashion, Arthur meditated in the office whilst sitting on a counter and staring blankly at the other side of the room.

Esperanto...

Bertilo Wennergren, sveda rokmuzikisto kaj gramatikisto pri Esperanto, ofte nomis la japanojn «napokapoj» pro la blankeco aŭ pureco de iliaj meditemaj mensoj. Tio ekzempliĝis, kiam Charles Simonyi, sciencisto en Mikrosofta Korporacio, vizitis nin en Japanujo, ĉe MSKK. Li lekciis pri iu programada temo nova kaj tre teknika per la angla. Poste, estis demanda tempo por la juna aŭdantaro, sed neniuj japanoj levis manon por demandi ion. Nur blankulo, Tom Hensel,

demandis ion al sinjoro Simonyi. Estis tipa japana meditema konduto.

La vera hungara nomo de la sciencisto estis Simonyi Károly. Li fariĝis usonano kaj riĉulo. Multe pli malfrue, li veturis al spaco, kiel «spacturisto» per rusa spacŝipo.

When I officially joined MSKK, I was treated to a fancy French restaurant as a welcoming lunch amongst other software writers and managers in the company. Some Japanese learnt French for fun and, one time, I heard a French announcement with an elegant female voice over the loudspeaker whilst walking through one of the major department stores; I thought that I was dreaming because practically all of the clients were Japanese. I suppose that it was a bit of surrealism for the clientele. It is interesting to note that the Tōkyō Tower was completed in 1958 as an imitation of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. The two cultures seemed compatible with each other. But really, Japanese were more like Germans for their love of technology.

Amongst the native Japanese folk in MSKK, I also befriended Kyōko Oikawa, who was the office secretary ("OL" or office lady in Japanese); Yōko Maruyama, who was my Japanese-language teacher; Hiromi Matsuura, who was the tester lead; Kenzaburō Tamaru, who was the sneaky young development lead; Kazushige Kabayama, who was a heavy smoker and joked that his nickname was 'Kaba' (a pun on 'cover' or 'hippopotamus' although he was not fat himself); Juichi Takahashi, who was a cultured person having learnt Mandarin Chinese in school; and Haruhiko Satō, who was a friendly young man in charge of translating all the manuals

and text into Japanese. There was also Fumio Wakatsuki, who was a friendly programmer contractor, who treated me to a Thai restaurant. Our team leader was the Mona-Lisa-looking woman, Matsuura-san, who reported to Jon Genka, the handsome, darker-complexioned Japanese-Hawaiian, who then reported to Akio Fujii, a high-ranking manager. I was "Biku-chan" to all of them. I had that affectionate title "chan," whilst most others had "san" like "Genka-san," but it was "kun" like "Tamaru-kun" for junior staff, and it was "sensei" like "Maruyama-sensei" for teachers, and it was "sama" like "Fujii-sama" for very important people.

There were often insinuations about being either Western or Eastern. The dog and the cat respectively epitomized them.

Most lunch outings, I ate together with Takahashi-san, Matsuura-san, and Tamaru-kun, but also sometimes with the giant *hapa* (Eurasian) Jeff Muzzy. We tried almost a different restaurant every time, even those in hidden alleyways. We were a quiet bunch, as was not unusual with Japanese. I had my taste of seaweed on spaghetti and more exotic menus. It was tranquil joy.

My gang liked Denny's restaurant too. Jeff Muzzy would order two servings of anything. The menu was somewhat different from the Denny's in Canada. I liked all the Japanized Western food.

Near the office was a restaurant called *Vamos la*, which served Japanized European cuisine. I remembered the mini-sized Portuguese or Spanish sausages from there. Next to that restaurant was the fitness club, in which one could not go without very clean clothes as there was an implicit dress code.

There was an indoor swimming pool, which one could not use without a rubber head cover.

Esperanto...

Kiam mi sidis en la naĝejo, la naĝeja gardisto staranta apud la rando diris al mi, ke mi bezonas kapkovrilon en la naĝejo. Poste, li diris kvazaŭflustre Japane la vorton «*kodomo*», kiu signifis infanon aŭ knabon. En vestejo post la vadado en la akvo aŭ uzado de ekzercejo, mi estis nuda tie kaj mezaĝa Japano pasis preter mi demandante Japane, «*Nihonjin desu ka?*» (Ĉu vi estas Japano?). Mi ne estis certe pri la procento da Japanoj, kiuj estis cirkumciditaj.

En iu manĝvendejo, mi pagis por kelkaj kolorplenaj cilindraj ladskataloj da varigustaj trinkaĵoj kun *nata de coco*, kiu estis Filipina deserto, aspektanta kiel molaj travideblaj kubetoj. La juna komizino demandis al mi Japane, «*Tabemasu ka?*» (Ĉu vi manĝas?). Tio, mi pensis, havis multajn subsugestojn.

Mi lernis la oportunan vojon por prepari vespermanĝojn. Survoje revenante al mia apartamento el la oficejo, mi haltis ĉe vendejo, kie troviĝis bovloj da freŝaj legomoj kaj mariskoj kaj fiŝoj. Mi aĉetis bovlon. Hejme, mi boligis la tuton. Poste, mi ĝue manĝis. Kelkfoje, mi vespermanĝis ĉe la oficejo. La oficejo pagis. Tio ofte estis *o-bentō* aŭ skatolmanĝo.

Jeff Muzzy was a science fiction enthusiast as much as I was, so we could relate to each other about Japan in this genre. We had an inside joke that MSKK was some kind of space station orbiting an alien planet like that of "DS9" in the popular *Star Trek* show at the time, *Deep Space 9*. We also joked about traditional Japanese kitchen utensils looking like weapons of

the warrior race Klingons in *Star Trek*. And the Japanese had the sneakiness of the goblin-like Ferengi. And the Japanese were philosophical like the noble Vulcans. And the Japanese were pious as the ritualistic Bajorans. These were perspectives looking through the eyes as *gaijin* (outsiders). But really, Jeff and I were not full-fledged *gaijin*. Jeff was a *hapa* and I could be considered an *Ajia-jin* (Asian person). In fact, Takahashi-san hinted that I was more of a *Chūgoku-jin* (Chinese person) for that he wrote my name fully in Chinese characters in jest. But maybe some thought that I was a Hispanic or something, but, indeed, some noticed that I was really a *mestizo*, a hybrid, a mixed-race person, a *hapa*, or truly a Filipino. In any case, my ambiguous appearance allowed me to blend in with the Japanese crowd as Craig Webber, a white American, mentioned to me explicitly...

Jeff Muzzy seemed like a special person in Microsoft. It was hearsay that he often set up the computer for Bill Gates, owner and mastermind of the megacorporation. However, Jeff was an adamant person. Sometimes we loudly argued about silly things like the Metric System. He seemed to think that the English system of measurement was an integral part of American culture. In Canadian schools, I was educated in Metric. Japan and most of the world were Metric. Because I took Chemical Engineering in university, I knew that the English system was too complicated and was often the cause of erroneous calculations. That old system was so messy that it affected the work of engineers and technicians. Indeed, Japan was Metric, except for a few things like measuring the space in apartments; how many *tatami* mats would fit in them was the way to measure these places.

In the first year in Japan, 1992, I often lodged in the fancy

Tōkyō Hilton in the Shinjuku ward. Tipping was not common in Japan as it was a source of inconvenience and of embarrassment. One always expected good service no matter what. Often when I returned to my hotel room, there were paper pieces of glossy, colourful sex advertisements slipped under the door. One time, I was in a more Japanese-style hotel called Shinjuku Washington Hotel, where it was common practice to carry one's own luggage.

By 1993, I moved into a small, neat apartment called Leaf Court in the Hatagaya area of the Shibuya ward. The alleyways around there were festively decorated. One time, I played loud music and the apartment administration complained to MSKK.

Then I eventually moved into a bigger apartment in the Yoyogi area in the Shibuya ward. My neighbours were Jeff Muzzy, Tom Hensel, and Craig Webber, all of whom worked for the company. I also had a middle-aged *Filipina* neighbour next door to me; she said that she worked for a Swedish company in the city.

Tagalog...

Yaong Pilipinang kápitbáhay ko, noóng isáng araw, ay kumatók sa aking pintô at nagbigáy sa akin ng isáng serámikáng mangkók na punô ng maputíng tapiyoka na may sabáw. Oo, nga, sabi namin sa isip naming pareho na para kamíng nasa Pilipinas. Alám niyá na akó'y lumakí sa Pilipinas at lumipat sa Kánada nang batà pa akó. Parang umuwî akó...

My then home address was:

Room 101, Residence Hayashi 4-36-17 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku
Tōkyō 151, Japan
Telephone (03) 3379-2697

When my possessions, all packed in big blue plastic containers, were shipped from Canada and arrived in Japan, an office secretary told me that one of my knives was confiscated because it was over 15 cm long. It was a knife, or dagger rather, with a twisted goat's horn as a handle. I bought it in Egypt in 1991. The secretary said that she was very sorry.

My apartment was near a fast-food restaurant called Yoshinoya, which served its signature dish, the *gyūdon*, beef and rice in a bowl. There were foreigners, including a few Hispanics, that patronized it. Right next to my apartment building was a fancy bistro called Masutasshu ("Moustache"), which served a kind of fusion cuisine of European and Japanese styles.

I brought my sturdy rollerblades from Canada. With a hard purple helmet on my head, I clumsily experimented skating around on neighbourhood asphalt. One time, Jeff Muzzy was walking by whilst he was with a brown-haired white woman friend visiting from America. They chuckled as they saw me skating.

Esperanto...

Ofte en Japanujo, oni aŭdis la Japanan adjektivon *sabishii*. Ĝi temis pri rafinata simpla soleco. Viroj, kiel mi, kiuj marŝis solece, ofte aŭdis tion aplikatan de aliaj al ili...

Ah memories... My landlady, Hayashi-san, knew not the

tongue of Shakespeare. More accurately, she could not really speak good English and she had a strong, hard Japanese accent. With me, she alternated between English and Japanese. At the top floor of my building was a beautiful view of Tōkyō all lit up at night. It was so quiet up there above the hive.

On the roof of my Tōkyō building was the laundry room where of course I did my laundry. "Sentaku suru" was to do the laundry; "sentakumono" was the laundry itself. Tōkyō was strange in a way that the whole city felt like one gigantic village, an organic labyrinthine sprawl with a human perspective intact from medieval times. Also, it was like a giant throbbing machine. The image of that luminous city is forever etched into my mind like a fine *ukiyō-e* woodblock print.

Each area of Metropolitan Tōkyō had a distinctive character. It was fascinating to just stroll and take the subway and trains to different areas. It was a big place. It was a giant amusement park. It was full of "eye candy."

I lived five minutes' walk from a train station. It was the Keiō Line at the Hatsudai train station. The next stop west was Hatagaya, then farther west was Sasazuka, which was walking distance from my workplace.

East from the Hatsudai station was Shinjuku, a neon paradise. From Shinjuku, I could take the Yamanote Line, which went around in circles with over 25 stops, including Shinjuku, Harajuku, Shibuya, Ebisu, Shinagawa, Tōkyō Proper, Akihabara, Ueno, Ikebukuro, Takada-no-baba, then Shinjuku again, in a full circle. Each stop at this circular

constellation was like a different planet. That circle was part of a much larger web of subway and train lines.

Shinjuku was a neon jungle for amusement, very carnal or otherwise light-hearted fun. It was full of the so-called "Love Hotels" about which Westerners often heard. A frequent stop of mine in Shinjuku was the giant Kinokuniya Bookstore. Japanese people liked reading copiously.

Most Japanese were honest when dealing with money, but one had to be cautious with taxi drivers and at places like striptease parlours. They were sometimes dishonest. I watched one striptease wherein the woman on the stage had very pale skin. She was partly wrapped in delicate white chiffon. All the Japanese men were very, very quiet. But there were two white Americans who were excitedly shouting and whistling.

One day, I wanted to see the auctions at the fish market at Tsukiji. But I arrived too late. The auctions happened very early in the morning. Anyway, the area was very quaint. There was an old shrine or temple there.

I often visited Ueno where there were museums and parks. There, on a chilly winter day, would be stalls on wheels that sold coal-baked sweet potato called 'yaki-imo'. I would smother its steaming tender orange flesh with melting butter. It was so comforting on a crispy cold day. I would eventually learn about 'beni-imo' which was purple yam or purple sweet potato. I liked purple, which in Japanese was 'murasaki'.

At Ueno, Japanese would wait patiently and silently in very long winding queues outside to see ancient European

paintings in the museum. A Peruvian band in colourful garb played traditional Andean music with their pan flutes.

Wandering the wooded areas in Ueno Park, I chanced upon a pond filled with bright orange *koi* or carp. I was all alone until a middle-aged Japanese man came by. He asked, "What are you doing here?" He then said, "It's carp. It's *crap*..." I guessed that it was his own kind of Zen expression. But later, I found out that the word "koi" was a pun for *love*.

Akihabara was a district full of the latest electronic gizmos. Asakusa was a grand temple area, leading to which was an alley lined with shops of traditional Japanese wares. Kappabashi Kitchenware Town was where one could buy real-looking plastic replicas of food, such as plastic sushi, plastic ice cream parfaits, plastic bowls of plastic noodle soup, and so on.

There was also Harajuku where on weekends teenagers would dance on the streets to amateur rock bands. Near there was Takeshita-dōri, a street for inexpensive clothing, kamikaze headbands, and other curios. It lead to a park with a Shintō shrine and a bazaar of antiquities. That place was where I bought the antique red Shintō wedding gown for my mother and an old green metal replica of a Shōgun's helmet. At Yoyogi Park in the weekends, scores of Iranians would loiter in one treed area to have tea. They scooped their tea from a big plastic container. The peaceful Meiji Jingū shrine was nearby, all in its wooden perfection. The high-class department stores like Mitsukoshi, Isetan, and others were everywhere. At the bottom basements of these places were virtual food festivals. I frequented Virgin Megastore, a store for music disks; it was reachable from the underground

subway tunnels. Sometimes stray Iranians would come up to me and ask, "Terefon kād?" They were selling telephone cards. In the train, a young Iranian man was flirting or seducing a Japanese teenage girl; in a sense, they were both talking to me indirectly. Many Iranians worked in the construction industry in the city. One time, whilst I was eating at an East Indian restaurant, two restaurateurs, both East Indian, were speaking Japanese quite fluently behind me. I guessed that they had been living in Japan a long time.

Black people used on billboards and advertisement posters were not uncommon in Tōkyō. Japanese opined that they were *kakkoii* (cool). There were few actual black people that I saw in Tōkyō. I could not tell if they were Americans or Africans. Whilst I was standing on temple grounds in the city of Kyōto with Takahashi-san, a school bus sped by and, from inside, a high school student in uniform shouted through the window, "*Kokujin!*" (black person). I was wearing a grey university sweatshirt with the big words "HARVARD UNIVERSITY" on it. I supposed that he recognized me as a hybrid and wanted to reinforce my non-whiteness, or that maybe the sweatshirt looked too foreign, or that not wearing my eyeglasses at the time made me look Hawaiian with especially my wavy hair. But many Japanese curled their hair.

One time, Inada-san and I ate in a Chinese noodle restaurant. After the meal, we sat and chatted at the table. The Chinese-Japanese, middle-aged restaurateur stood by us. She made a reference to Ben Johnson, the black Jamaican-Canadian sprinter whom a committee disqualified for doping during the 1988 Summer Olympics. She used the term "Benjo-san" where "benjo" was the word for toilet. Apparently, she hinted that our speaking so much English was distasteful to her. And

Inada-san previously indicated that I was from Canada. Ben Johnson was a handsome man. Evidently, she considered that Japan was a "black" country. Much of Japanese communication was of "double entendres."

Japan was a rich country, but Tōkyō had its share of the underprivileged. They were few. Unlike bums that I saw in other countries, these Japanese bums were organized and showed neatness such as in the cardboard boxes they used to cover their sleeping areas. Some grew their hair long and Rastafarian-like, somewhat like ascetic monks. They were poor, but they were still neat and still waxed philosophic. Strangely, these people clustered in areas, such as train station exits, where there were many foreigners.

At one point, I was bicycling to work. I was a fast rider. It annoyed a few pedestrians. I usually parked and locked my bicycle in front of my office building. One day, I was surprised to see it missing and stolen. I told my apartment landlady Hayashi-san and she led me to the nearest *kōban*, a police box, to report it missing. Sometime afterwards, some days, I found a bicycle similar in shape to mine parked in front of my office building, but it was coloured green, the colour of youth, envy, and Esperanto. But I was not so sure. It was fishy. (I later suspected that perhaps the thief was not Japanese.) Then I decided to use the train to get to work. Very much later, I would suspect that the whole trouble encircled a word play on the Japanese words *jiten* (dictionary) and *jitensha* (bicycle). Indeed, all that I lacked were thousands of Japanese words... I would remember that I also bought an electronic, portable Japanese dictionary, a Canon Word Super IDX-9500. Perhaps, some Japanese thought that it was a waste of money. Perhaps, not all Japanese were technophiles. Perhaps, they thought that I was really a traditionalist at heart

with all my antiques in my apartment...

There were a few pranksters in the sometimes smoky office. One time, I booted up my computer, then on the screen was an image of a naked white woman. I had a communist Soviet pendant on my navy blue military-looking winter jacket. One day, the pendant went missing. I bought that precious red pendant from a vendor in a park in the city. Another day, I found broken my black music disk player that sat on my desk. All these things to Japanese had meaning...

My anthropological suspicion was that Japanese were varying concoctions of several human subspecies, namely the Northern Mongoloids, the Southern Mongoloids, the Proto-Mongoloids ("Amerindians"), and the Caucasoids. In ancient times, there were masks depicting "supernatural creatures" called *tengu*, which possessed often hairy faces and long noses. They were likely Caucasoids—perhaps both Nordic and Mediterranean types. (Japan was close to Siberia.) Or even, some of the *tengu* might have been East Indians (Australoid-Caucasoid *mestizos*), as India was a spiritual centre of Asia. Or, the *tengu* might have been Turkic peoples, or those physically similar. (In the colder northern islands of Japan, there was an ancient indigenous hairy-faced people called the Ainu, who probably were at least partly Caucasoid and partly Mongoloid.)

I opined that Japanese were much like Filipinos, but their eyes were often squintier and their skin colour gradation tended to the lighter shades than Filipinos. But unlike Filipinos, Japanese retained still much of their culture despite some modernization.

Esperanto...

Ekzistis eble du ĉefaj korpotipoj en Japanujo. Estis la tipo, kiu aspektis pli Ĉina aŭ Korea kun pli hela haŭto kaj kun pli strabismaj okuloj. Kaj estis la alia tipo, kiu aspektis pli Indiana aŭ Malaja-Polinezia kun pli malhela, pli bruna haŭto kaj kun malpli strabismaj okuloj. Multaj homoj estis miksaĵo de ĉi tiuj du. Kiel termometro, ekzistis gamo inter la ekstremoj. En la antikvaj jaroj, Nagasaki estis centro de internacia komerco kaj multaj Eŭropanoj, ĉefe Portugaloj kaj probable Nederlandanoj, intermiksiĝis kun Japaninoj, rezultante en mestizoj. Tra jarcentoj, tiaj genoj etendiĝis tra la lando. Multaj Japanoj havis pli da korpoharoj, kiuj estis eble aŭ ne eble la rezultoj de tiuj genoj.

In ethnology, a popular theory was that many present-day Japanese were descendants of both the indigenous Jōmon people (during the years *circa* -14000/-00300) and the immigrant Yayoi people (during the years *circa* -0300/+0300). The earlier Jōmon, perhaps, were anthropologically more Proto-Mongoloid ("Amerindian") or else Southern Mongoloid (Malayo-Polynesian) in nature, these two being different, whilst the latter Yayoi were more Northern Mongoloid in nature. There was much race-mixing in the islands. Probably, there were multiple waves of peoples coming from different directions and their ethnic identities would be yet unknown. (I used here the ISO 8601 standard for dates and times.)

Esperanto...

Antaŭ jarcentoj, Nagasaki estis centro de Kristanismo kaj Eŭropa lernado en Japanujo. Post la bombado sur Hiroŝima

la 6an de aŭgusto de 1945, Nagasaki estis bombita la 9an de aŭgusto de 1945. La nuklea bombo de uranio-235 sur Hiroŝima nomiĝis «Little Boy» kun ekvivalento al 12-15 kilotunoj da TNT (trinitrotolueno) aŭ 50-63 teraĵuloj; ĝi ja mortigis almenaŭ 140 000 personojn. La nuklea bombo de plutonio-239 sur Nagasaki strange nomiĝis «Fat Man» kun ekvivalento al 20-22 kilotunoj da TNT aŭ 84-92 teraĵuloj; ĝi ja mortigis almenaŭ 80 000 personojn.

Old Office:

Microsoft Co., Ltd. K-Building 5-25, 7-Chome Nishi-Shinjuku
Shinjuku-ku, Tōkyō 160 Japan

New Office:

Microsoft Co., Ltd. Sasazuka NA Building 50-1, 1-Chome
Sasazuka Shibuya-ku, Tōkyō 151 Japan

At first, the Microsoft office was at the K-Building in the beehive of the Shinjuku ward, then administrators had it moved to the Sasazuka NA Building in the Shibuya ward. I took the train of the Keiō Line at the Hatsudai station, then headed west skipping the Hatagaya station, then onto the Sasazuka station, my final stop.

There were other foreigners working in the office. One was John Talbot, a Japanized Englishman, a software writer who lived with his Japanese wife and baby. He seemed fluent in Japanese. John previously worked for Lotus Corporation in Japan. There was also a Filipino guy there, a software writer. He spoke Japanese and had been in Japan for a long time. And there was a Chinese man who spoke Mandarin with Takahashi-san. There were an Anglo-Canadian Richard and an Anglo-Australian Steve Gilbert, who worked in the

technical support department. They spoke Japanese pretty well. There were other white Americans, including lively Randy in marketing, who could speak Japanese.

There were a few people kind enough to show me around. With Robert Orndorff the Jewish-American, I made it to Kamakura and other smaller towns in Japan. With Takahashi-san, I attended tea ceremony practice. He, together with some Japanese women dressed in kimonos, showed me the itchy-bitsy details of that art of *o-cha*. I had to wear, along with clean white socks, a nice suit, which he exclaimed was "*Kakkoii!*" (Cool!). Also with Takahashi-san, I made it to glorious, ancient Kyōto, there to see ancient Japan.

Like a hippy, Takahashi-san drove, if I could use a slang term, a small old *beater*, which maneuvered speedily through constricted alleyways. Most automobiles in Japan were in good condition as there were strict regulations. With the Ogasawara family, I made it to Mt. Fuji and Lake Biwa. The Ogasawara family was that of the student named Masāki, who stayed in my home in Canada. And there were memorable *karaoke* nights with the office gang and separately with the Ogasawaras. Usually, I sang easy Beatles lyrics and *La Bamba*. Singing in front of people, I thought, was rather un-Japanese because it encouraged selfhood.

Eating was a real pleasure in Japan. Sensuality permeated everything that Japanese people did. Restaurant-hopping was a hobby for me, Jeff Muzzy, and others. Also, we had lavish buffets at the Tōkyō Hilton. Inada-san treated me to whale meat cuisine at the Kujira-ya, literally "Whale Shop," in the Shibuya ward. That restaurant took the whale meat from quotas of scientific expeditions. I felt a little guilty eating

whale.

Oikawa-san was an expert in the art of *ikebana*, flower-arranging, and demonstrated it silently in the office. The plants, which she used in the arrangement, looked like things that grew in the marshes. As time passed, the plant things in the arrangement grew fuzzier and hairier. It looked like an erotic Zen greeting. Maruyama-sensei was my Japanese-language teacher. I fell in love with both these women and I compared them to the characters May and Consuela in the science fiction movie *Zardoz*, starring Sean Connery as Zed and set in the year 2293.

One time, there was an industrial exposition in Chiba Prefecture, in a big convention centre called *Makuhari Messe*, which to my ears sounded a bit German. There was a booth for Microsoft. After the hullabaloo, my crew, including Jeff Muzzy, hiked outside. There were palm trees along avenues. There was a nice beach. Although, on that day, it was cloudy.

Jeff often reminded me of the fat Maitreya Buddha in Chinese culture. His skin was of darker shade which made him look somewhat Indian, or even Hawaiian or Samoan. Being part-Japanese, he had relatives in Japan.

Esperanto...

La familio Ogasawara invitis min al sia domo. Sinjoro Ogasawara donis al mi instrukciojn por metroe atingi la lokon. Kaj la vojo al ĝi estis iom malsimpla, tiel ke mi estis iom malfrua. Ĉe la domo de la familio Ogasawara, kune kun ili, mi manĝis ravajn Japanajn manĝaĵojn kuiritajn de sinjorino Ogasawara mem. Krome, ni manĝis iom da

Kentucky Fried Chicken. La gesinjoroj antaŭe loĝis dum kelke da tempo en la orienta marbordo de Usono. Ja, ni ĉiuj ŝatis ambaŭ okcidentajn kaj orientajn manĝaĵojn.

I tested my Japanese slang on Mr. and Mrs. Ogasawara. I mentioned the word "*kūru*" (cool), but they did not know the word. Mrs. Ogasawara proclaimed, "*Muzukashii...*" (difficult). I supposed that slang words depended on the generation of people using them. Mrs. Ogasawara said that I was "*atama ga ii*" or that I had a good head.

Esperanto...

Alitempe, mi kaj gesinjoroj Ogasawara manĝis en restoracio. Tie troviĝis ankaŭ la mezaĝa fratino aŭ iu parenco de sinjoro Ogasawara. Ŝi diris al mi, ke ŝi antaŭe edziniĝis kun Filipinano kaj nuntempe ŝi eksedziniĝis. Ili eble avertis min pri la volatileco de miksaj geedziĝoj.

Iam, sinjorino Ogasawara demandis min pri miaj favorataj filmoj. Mi diris al ŝi, ke unu el ili estas *Baza Instinkto* kun la blonda sireno, Sharon Stone.

The Ogasawaras had a so-called "second home" in the countryside, something like a modern cabin in the woods. There was a small village with a community bath house. I was not used to being naked with a lot of strangers. But apparently, Japanese were not so prudish.

Esperanto...

Kune kun aliaj junaj Japanoj, inkluzive de unu dudekkelkjarulo kaj du dekkelkjaruloj, mi vojaĝis al la

eksterurba areo de la arboplena Lago Biwa. Tiam tre malvarmis. La aliaj tri fiŝkaptis sur boato kaj mi restis en la hejtgita belaspekta aŭtomobilo pro ekstera malvarmego. Mi ne havis vetertaŭgajn vestojn tiam. Poste, ni iris al la kampara moderna dometo de la familio Ogasawara. Ni banis nin en la vilaĝa komuna banejo. Venonttage, ni revenis al la urbo. Survoje, ni haltis ĉe karedomo por manĝi korean rizon. Tio eble aludis pri Orienta religio. Aŭ ĉu mi aspektis Baratano? Ĉie en Japanujo troviĝis karedomoj kun diversaj kareaj pladoj. Dum kiam mia dudekelkjaraĝa kunulo stiris, elurbe kaj urben, li fumis kaj fumis cigaredojn, kio plenigis la aŭtomobilon kun fumo. Tio, mi pensis, havis multajn subsugestojn. Tamen, mi tute ĝuis la vojaĝon.

Another time I spent with the Ogasawaras was at a fireworks display. We had a nighttime picnic on the roof of a tall building overlooking a meandering river. After eating interesting Japanese picnic cuisine and chatting, we viewed the beautiful *hanabi* or "flower fire."

The Ogasawaras comprised of the father Tadashi, the mother Junko, the eldest son Masāki, the youngest son Hiruki-chan, and a daughter. They had a bit of Korean ancestry. They were all very fair-skinned, except for Hiruki-chan who was dark. Hiruki-chan was a baseball fan. Baseball was a popular sport in Japan, even much before World War II, my manager Akio Fujii told me.

I was with some other Japanese people, who were a little older than I, one time. As we walked through city streets, we stopped by a shrine. They did a simple ritual in front of it. I mentioned to them how "convenient" their religion was. They all giggled and one lady repeated in Japanese fashion,

"*Konbiniento!*" One of the men told me that he and his wife would go with me to Tōkyō Disneyland at an appointed time. Then later he telephoned me and said that he was a little busy to go just then. I said that it was no problem. I supposed that many Japanese were hinting that I was still very much just a kid. The whole of Tōkyō was my Disneyland...

There was a point in time in Japan when I thought myself as not being a tourist anymore, but actually living there. That time was when I stopped carrying my camera and taking pictures.

I learnt some "underground" Japanese slang. One word made me snicker. It was *herusu*, derived from the English word "health." *Herusu* was oral sex.

Esperanto...

Cigaredfumado estis populara en Japanujo. Iam mi marŝis tra iu subtera vojo de la urbo. Unu marŝanta viro fumis tro, tiel ke la griza fumo kovris mian vizaĝon. Mi fortrapide svingis mian dekstran manon antaŭ mia vizaĝo. Pasanta juna alta svelta virino diris al mi Japane, «Ŝiro no ko!», kiu estis kalemburo por «kastela infano» kaj «blanka infano».

Viro kun lipharoj, Fumio Wakatsuki, kiu estis subkontrakta komputilista kunlaboranto ĉe mia oficejo, invitis min al Taja restoracio. Tie ni ĝue manĝis. Poste, ni parolis. Kaj dum tio, li fumis kaj fumis, kiel sceno el filmo de la 1950aj jaroj. En mia oficejo mem, multaj tro fumis. Estis malbone por mi...

An interesting event happened one time near a train station where a young Japanese woman was recruiting new members

for a New Religious Movement (NRM). I followed her to her temple where I then donned a robe and was submerged and baptised in holy water outside on the temple grounds. Afterwards, there was a prayer with a Japanese man along with the initial young woman. The man said that I should only get baptised once in a lifetime. Then the woman led me to a restaurant and I was offered a bowl of *ramen* because it was cold that day. The ritual was some form of spiritual salvation according to the beliefs of their NRM, of which there was a multitude in Japan.

One time, I took the metro to Tōkyō Proper. Whilst walking, I noticed on the almost empty street a lone young Japanese man. And on his shoulder, he carried a very big cross, perhaps wooden, at the base of which was a wheel that allowed the whole thing to roll on the asphalt. The scene looked surrealistically intriguing. It was true that Japanese were experimenting with many belief systems. The roots of the multicoloured NRMs were various religions—both Western and Eastern—including Buddhism, Shintō, Christianity, and others. There was a growth spurt of these NRMs right after World War II. According to some sources, many Japanese were bireligious, being both Buddhist and Shintō. They had usually a Shintō wedding and a Buddhist funeral. Perhaps, this arrangement was why Japanese associated Buddhism with death. In places like Thailand, Buddhism had no connotation with death, although many Thais had a folkloric Animistic religion like Japanese Shintō in conjunction with their Buddhist beliefs.

Two Chinese friends from Canada visited me whilst I was in Japan.

En route to China, Steve Kwong, a friend from university, arrived. I showed him around the city. He helped me carry newly bought barbells through the subway. Steve had another friend in the city. The friend and his wife picked us up in his automobile. Steve's friend showed us his empty office during that non-working day. There was a long table shared by employees. Rank strictly determined the seating of employees around there. Later on, we drove to an industrial-looking area around a river. We then ate pizza in a restaurant overlooking the riverfront, which seemed like a scene in a science fiction movie.

Sometime afterwards, Steve flew to China. En route back to Canada, he revisited me and presented me with a green Chinese military uniform, which I thoroughly appreciated.

David Ho, another friend from university, arrived. One funny scene was when he intentionally picked his nose in public in a fast-food restaurant. I was not too sure what he meant by that...

Back at the company, my team in Japan was being temporarily relocated to the American headquarters. I decided to transfer there to Washington State and find a new beginning. Nearing the end of my term in Japan, I had a Japanese female counsellor, who spoke to me in Spanish, which some Japanese knew was one of my ancestral languages because maybe they looked at my résumé. I suppose that one hint was that some problems occurred because of linguistic miscommunication. And maybe they knew that I was attracted to the Japanese language because of its powerful sound. Later, I suspected that there could be a secret Esperanto revolution in Japan, in any case, at least a

leaning towards Latin culture. I would remember that there was a yearly Samba festival in Tōkyō, the influence of Brazilian immigrants there. Many Latin Americans who had any Japanese ancestry could be immigrants in Japan. Many of them were multiracial. When they get to Japan, social workers indoctrinated them to the Japanese Dream. Indeed, there were many Koreans and Iranians in the city. The Japanese populace was divided on the issue of mixed races. The Japanese seemed to prefer brownish people into their society because their cultures were more compatible.

Indeed, there were some detractions in my stay in Tōkyō. Where I lived particularly, there was a subtle plastic-like, chemical fragrance in the air, which could have been from air pollution. Also, the cold viruses in the winter were especially fierce; they were strains from the Asian mainland. Then of course there was the language situation.

Maruyama-sensei, my Japanese-language teacher, was an excellent teacher. She held a small class with me, Tom Hensel, and Jeff Muzzy as students in a room in the office building. She noticed how fast a learner I was. She had a secure, almost masculine voice for a beautiful, fair-skinned woman, who was perhaps a little older than I was. I was somewhat enamoured that I gave her quite expensive books with glossy coloured pictures about Buddhism, which I had bought from museums and other places. I would remember that at one time she had vacationed in India with her mother. She brought a gift for me at the office, a small black elephant statuette with glassy bits on it. Indeed, someone else, a Japanese man, had mentioned that I was an "elephant" and that time was when I had lunch at Tamaru-kun's house where there was a German girl student with eyeglasses amongst the invited. Tamaru-kun

said that she was "cute." She said to me whilst we sat on the floor eating, "Talk about yourself." Japanese were not comfortable talking too much about themselves, but amongst Europeans such was a good trait to have and helped self-esteem. Japanese tended to internalize their feelings or emotions. And since they considered everything as art, so must speech be artful, which would require much effort. Hence, Japanese were not too talkative. Perhaps, they were the least talkative of all ethnic groups in this world...

Another interpretation of the little black elephant was that Maruyama-sensei was more interested in Hinduism than Buddhism. I did give her glossy Buddhist books before. Or another interpretation was that the elephant was Jeff Muzzy, whom, she thought, I should remember as a friend.

Esperanto...

Iam, mi kaj Tom Hensel vizitis Sud-Koreujon pro renovigi niajn vizojn. Ni veturis per aviadilo. En tiu lando, ni prenis lupagan aŭtomobilon. Dum kelkaj tagoj, ni restis en ĉambroj en bona hotelo en la ĉefurbo Seoul. Ni aĉetis multajn memoraĵojn kiel tradiciajn kolorplenajn maskojn. Dumnokte, ni esploris amuzejojn kiel trinkejojn. Kiel aliaj Aziaj urboj, Seoul havis seksindustrion.

La manĝaĵoj estis pli spicitaj ol tiuj en Japanujo, sed Koreoj manĝis ankaŭ Japanajojn kiel suŝiojn. Mi vidis surstratan tablon kaj sur tiu troviĝis amaso da netranĉitaj longaj flanksinkantaj suŝiaj rulaĵoj.

Seoul imponis min, kiel kurioza, sed moderna, loko. Mi ŝatis la kuriozajn labirintajn stratetojn.

At the office, there was another class that I attended, a cultural orientation class. There, they taught us about the finer details of Japanese culture. I made a gauche remark one day about the probability that Japan could be a Chinese province one day. Maybe I should not have said that. Indeed, my stay in Japan was like attending another university and I liked it. But my term there was soon ending.

MSKK gave me the option of staying in Japan, but I was thinking that it could not be a permanent stay since, as far I knew, citizenship was difficult to attain without Japanese ancestry. I was looking for a permanent home...

Esperanto...

Japanujo estis granda lando plejparte pro la lingvo kaj pro la manĝaĵo. Tiuj difinis la popolon. La arkitekturo en Tokio estis plejparte moderna aŭ postmoderna kaj malmulte da tiuj antikvaj strukturoj supervivis la Duan Mondmiliton. Oldaj konstruaĵoj ankoraŭ troviĝis en kelkaj lokoj, en la periferio...

Jeff Muzzy gave me a weathered sports magazine with an ice hockey player on the cover. What was he saying about Canada really?

By the very end of my sojourn in Japan, there was a Chinese woman from the USA who introduced herself to me as a new Human Resources employee at MSKK. At the day of my packing, she came by my apartment with her husband who was a white man. There were several packers there, all of them Japanese. One of them misspelt my surname on a box; "MADRANO" it was. Later, the Chinese woman messaged me

by electronic mail when I arrived in the USA. I told her jokingly that Tōkyō was "The Big Sushi" for me.

Perhaps, in Japan there were gay men who discouraged my further adventures into heterosexuality and were saving me from a possibly terrible marital situation. Or perhaps, some Japanese thought that I was specifically wanting slantier-eyed children, and that I should pursue more Caucasian-looking offspring for their own aesthetic reasons. Or perhaps, some thought that I was simply too young to pursue marriage. Or perhaps, the wiser of the Japanese knew that I was really wanting a more religious life, and that marriage would not work for the very spiritual...

In Japan, I learnt more about what it was that made one Oriental. Perhaps, Nonong always had been "Oriental" in outlook. Orientals, I learnt in Japan, liked "fuzzy logic," "metaphoric or metonymic language," and "subtle indirect communication." Japanese were also extremely meticulous compared to other ethnic groups and demanded high quality out of every service and object. They also preferred "group think" over too much "individualism," but I noticed that this trait did not inhibit too much of individual creativity.

Japanese were very artistic and creative. Japanese believed in "hierarchical society," which the neighbouring Chinese so-called "Communists"—really Authoritarian State Capitalists—tried to eliminate. (My political preference was Democratic State Capitalism.) Japanese had a spiritual dimension which one could not find elsewhere in the world. Perhaps, they were more like the ancient Amerindians in terms of spirituality. Japanese had these majestic gate-like structures called *torii* in their parks and harbours. These portals were entrances into the spiritual realm...

I listened to some Japanese music. I particularly liked the serenity of the album *Wica* EPO and the sexual ambiguity of the lesbian-like GAO *Roi Roi*. There was also the heavier rock of T-BOLAN *So Bad*. I listened also to some Okinawan new music from RINKEN BAND *Banji*. I liked also traditional Japanese Enka music. I would feel nostalgic whenever I would hear these songs...

I often watched music videos on television in my suite or played music at the booths at Virgin Megastore. Two songs were very important—"Return to Innocence" by Enigma and "Go West" by Pet Shop Boys...

The Japanese knew that I was in love with their language. It sounded somewhat like Spanish, as my departing counsellor insinuated. Indeed, I would find out much later that Japanese would be much easier if it were all in Roman letters, or what they called *Rōmaji*. Like Indonesian's, Japanese grammar, I thought, was easier than that of Spanish. Anyway, Japanese children learnt Japanese at first using phonetic *Kana*—the heart of the Japanese language. The *Kanji*—Chinese-derived logograms—they thought, were for older and old people. I knew all the *Kana*. To me, they were just as easy as *Rōmaji*.

In neighbouring Korea, people were rapidly becoming illiterate in Chinese logograms as more and more of their literature were all in phonetic *Hangeul*—the Korean alphabetic system...

Unlike others, Japanese were not too anthropocentric—human-centred. They did not automatically assume that objects had human-like aspect. An abstract object as a

language might not be human-like. The missing bicycle represented that a language could be like a vehicle to take me somewhere I had never been...

Japan was a unicorn. Japan was unique amongst nations. Seeing was a pleasure, because there were so many "eye candies." Hearing was a pleasure, because the sounds of the Japanese language usually reverberated spiritually. Japan was like another planet, altogether. All my reading and watching of sci-fi and fantasy in my youth eventually climaxed there in Japan, the pinnacle of how imagination became reality. The Japanese were amazing, because they could convert imagination into reality.

For the rest of my life would the Japanese Dream be etched in my mind. Long live sushi!



An American Dream

I arrived in America, in Washington State, sometime in 1994. I liked the spacious and modern campus at the Microsoft headquarters in Redmond. Again, it was yet another "university." Each building in this complex had some kind of fascinating postmodern sculpture-mural in the lobby.

The cities and suburbs around the campus were a void for me, though, somewhat "empty" in the Western sense. There was a meaningless mechanicalism in the society. The suburbs looked clean, but the city of Seattle itself looked a little rugged. I was adjusting. In Redmond and Bellevue were some good bookstores.

For a while, I lived in the Residence Inn by Marriott in Bellevue. I had a spacious suite. There, I enjoyed the swimming pool and hot tub outside quite frequently. I was wearing purple swimming shorts. Often, I used the exercise room. It was a quiet time for me. It seemed as though I was inebriated. I bought a big basket of strawberries and was hoping that Maruyama-sensei would come. I saw several Japanese co-workers from MSKK sojourning in adjacent suites. I drove a rented car because I was not yet committed to staying in Washington State.

Moma...

:: Simd laik ai steid at da :: Residence Inn :: for a long taim. Spent lots ov taim in da jakuzi autsaid, dei en nait. Wan taim, a litol wait gerl wid tipikal braun heir, longish, waz pransing araund da kortyard. Shi notist dat ai waz probabli sam oder reis az ai sat in da jakuzi. Den shi pranst bai wail yeling: "!Ai heit *reising*! ?Dont yu?" Ai aider tot dat shi waz biing retorikal or dat shi waz nat rili toking tu mi... ::

I later moved to a nice lakeside apartment at Chandler's Reach in Redmond, Washington. I did not really have any furniture. The carpet was new and clean, baby blue in colour. Outside, near there, I often sat on the docks staring at the lily-filled water and the motorboats of Lake Sammamish. A lot of sunny days I spent on the docks in order to meditate. They were timeless moments...

I bought a brand-new silver-grey bicycle, which sometimes I used to get from the apartment uphill to the campus and back again. I also bought a *futon* on which to sleep.

Before work in the morning, I would use the exercise equipment in the lobby of the administrative house of my apartment complex. I would do that consistently for several days. Then one day, it seemed that someone unlatched one of the weights. It surprised me. I suspected that it was the handsome blond moustached building attendant. Perhaps, a very muscularly toned body was not appealing to everyone. He probably thought that such activity was unhealthy...

4250 W. Lake Sammamish Parkway N.E., Apartment H-3052
Redmond, WA 98052 United States of America

When my possessions, all packed in big blue plastic containers, arrived from Japan to America, I noticed that some diskettes that I had with programming code were erased. So, someone apparently looked through my things.

Esperanto...

Redmond estis bela urbeto kun multaj riĉaj loĝantoj, multaj el kiuj laboris por Mikrosofto. En kelkaj lokoj tie troviĝis verdaj arbaroj kaj montetoj kaj akvaĵoj.

Iam, la kompanio havis grandan kunvenon en Seatlo. Per multaj aŭtobusoj, la laborantoj, plejparte vestintaj sin per T-ĉemizoj, veturis al granda kolorplena Meksika restoracio por festi. Poste, ili veturis al la kunvenejo. Tie sur la estrado, montriĝis la nova Araba versio de Vindozo, la ĉefa produkto. La Arabaj literoj fluis maldekstren sur la giganta ekrano. Tiutage, mi ne sciis la kialon, sed mia amiko Wilbur Fong, kiu estis maldika vireto, ŝajnis malkontenta.

Wilbur Fong, Kokwai Chan, and Frank Gee shared an

apartment together. To sleep on, they used only foam mattresses. It seemed that they were not intent in staying in Washington State. Whilst still in Canada, Kokwai Chan mentioned, in his Malaysian accent, that one of us, Frank and me, was the "dark shadow" of the other. Maybe, he thought that we were too close. Meanwhile, Isaac Chan, a married man with no kids, was planning to buy a house in Washington State. Kokwai still had his family living in Canada.

I had a couple of weeks to look for a new position in the Microsoft campus or headquarters in the USA. Another division in a secluded brownish building offered me a Builder Job, which I should have taken because it would have been really easy. It entailed looking after server computers that were scheduled to build massive software on a regular basis. But I wanted to work in my familiar division, the Workgroup Division in a white modern building, where my familiar co-workers and friends, many transferred from Canada, were located. Also partly to blame was that I wanted a more supervisory position, like being a "Program Manager," which was Microsoft terminology for a supervisory position liaising betwixt software developers, testers, and marketing. I was interviewed for a Program Manager position, but I was not suited, mainly because of the psychological "height requirement." One of the interviewers was a big blond young man, in shorts, who picked up a green pea from the chair on which he sat. The green *pea* was I, perhaps a non-yellowish, some opined, different-coloured, unusual Oriental.

Eventually, I accepted a position in the Workgroup Division as a Quick Fix Software Engineer, which entailed patching software on demand. The good thing was that I got the position by circumventing normal interview procedure. My

manager again was Rick Cheyne, who was also my manager when I worked in the Canadian subsidiary. The position was an error for me, I later thought. I should have taken that easy Builder Job in that nicer, older brown building. The great thing about Microsoft in all three countries for which I worked was the relaxing T-shirt dress code. But usually, marketing people were a bit dressier with Polo shirts and casual slacks, or in the case of Japan, actual business suit attire. Software engineers and testers most always wore T-shirts with blue jeans or casual pants, but sometimes in warmer weather, shorts. In all three countries, we had "flextime" hours.

Esperanto...

Iam, Rick Cheyne diris al mi, «Vi ĵus frapis vian edzinon!» post kiam mi forte brufermis pordon en la oficejo. Rick konfuziĝis pri mia konduto tiam kiam mi estis iom malsana. Alikaze, Rick estis bona laborestro.

Tagalog...

Noóng isáng araw sa aking apartment, nakita ko na may isáng tamtaks ang isáng gulóng ng aking bisikleta. Hindî ko alám kung may nagsadyâ o aksidente lamang. Sa anú't anó man, tinulungan akó ni Frank Gee at dinalá namin ang bisikleta sa kanyáng awto hanggáng sa tindahan ng mga bisikleta. At doón ay may tagagawâ. Isáng Amerikanong itím ang nagyari ng aking gulóng. Pagkatapos, sabi niyá sa amin, "Get outta here!"—Umalís na kayó! Mukháng balisá siyá. Hindî akó pinabayad...

Back in the 1970's and the 1980's in Canada, it was common

that popular television miniseries would monopolize the television audience. In 1977, most everyone watched *Roots*, portraying the plight of American Negroids through generations, starting from Africa. Alex Haley wrote the novel *Roots*. In 1980, most everyone watched *Shōgun*, the saga of a European mariner in feudal Japan during the early 1600's. James Clavell wrote the novel *Shōgun*.

Back now in 1994, I toured by my rented automobile the major parks in the Seattle area. They included one with a pretty garden and a large, old greenhouse. I toured the neighbourhoods, including those with expensive homes. They were not too unusual for me because they looked like homes which I had seen in Vancouver or West Vancouver. I went to the Space Needle. And it reminded me of the PNE, the Pacific National Exhibition, in Vancouver. The place looked a little bedraggled, but it was fun nevertheless. Unlike Vancouver though, Seattle was full of old, rugged automobiles.

The shopping was excellent in the area of Bellevue and Redmond. The stores had more diverse stock than what one would see up in Canada. I shopped for new clothes, colourful T-shirts with fancy symbols and comfortable shorts.

It seemed that there was a lot of space in these neat and tidy suburbs. Of course, as this was America, freeways were common.

There were wooded parks along Lake Sammamish. That name "Sammamish" in the local Lushootseed Salish indigenous language might mean either "people" or "hunter." It was probably at Marymoor Park or Idylwood Park where I saw lots of Negroids picnicking noisily and gleefully. Such a sight

of many black people was rare in my province of British Columbia. Neighbouring Washington State had more racial diversity. The Greater Vancouver Regional District was becoming too Asiatic...

Later as if I were inebriated, I decided to tour eastern Washington, then western Washington, along the coast, on my own. In eastern Washington, I arrived in a small town where there was an antique shop. There, I bought an old brass horn. In some park areas, there were rusty, old abandoned automobiles, overgrown with forest plants. In western Washington, after passing through wild forested areas and marsh-like places, I ended up in some other small town. I lodged in a seaside hotel. I walked along the beautiful beach. In my hotel room, on my bed, I was hearing voices without faces. The next day, I drove northwards along the coast and reached yet another small town. There, I ate in a quaint Chinese restaurant. The Oriental waitress had a strange look on her face as if yellow-brown people, such as I, were uncommon in that area, where the feeling of the Old Wild West lingered on. I was like Kwai Chang Caine (David Carradine), the wandering monk in the old television show *Kung Fu*. I stopped at another small town, where there was an old-fashioned gasoline station, whose gasoline nozzles would not fit my rental car's tank hole. Subsequently, I headed home to my apartment.

In a telephone conversation with my mother from Canada, she thought that I was bored and suggested that I buy a television set, which I did. But later I found that there was nothing really to watch. I preferred to read books in quiet. One memorable book that I bought in the area was *A Sanskrit Grammar for Students* by Arthur A. MacDonell. Sanskrit was

the liturgical language of Hinduism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. In my secret mind, I wanted to remain in Asia. It was my brother Fernando who suggested that I buy the *futon* —"queen-size" as he jested and suggested—so I could sleep well.

Eventually, I somehow fell ill and I telephoned the local police about my apparently supernatural communication with a Higher Being. The Redmond police came and they looked suspicious. As one cop questioned me, the other one had glazed eyes and had his hand seemingly about to reach something at his side. Luckily, nothing violent happened. They contacted my family from Canada. Soon, my family fetched me and we went back across the border. All my things were packed into a big white van, but the border guards did not bother checking.

A strange thing happened whilst we were about to leave my apartment. The toilet got plugged up and I had to call the handsome blond moustached building attendant. The water spilt onto the new carpet whilst he used the plunger. It was tragic.

Maybe I was depressed when I was in Washington State. If my mental state were better then, maybe I would have liked to stay in Washington State. But I have doubts now that I was depressed at all. One thing I really did not like about that society was the total reliance on the automobile. Tōkyō was like an East Coast city or European city in the sense that many people took public transit, especially the trains and subways. I thought the American Dream was something for me. But I found out later that it was a mistake in hindsight. The Japanese Dream was the right one for me, I imagined.

America was America that was America It did not really disappoint me, because I knew America was much like Canada.



Suburbia Revisited

Back in Canada later in 1994, I had some time to readjust to the North American environment. When I searched for my sci-fi book collection at home, I found out that one of my parents had disposed of them beforehand. It was like throwing away my childhood. How mysterious it was. I wondered what was the motivation to do that. It might have been something to do with religion. But I opined that a good thing about being back home in West Coast Canada was that the society was more Asiatic than in Washington State. It was like a temperate-zone Singapore, or more likely, a temperate-zone Hong Kong. The racial demographics were different in Washington State where there were Latinos tending the gardens and many black people walking on the streets. But in Seattle, I did see many Asians, like those who looked like Lao people in traditional garb.

In Canada, there was a long interim before I went back to the workforce. I was back at House Rideau in the island-suburb of Richmond. It was Lulu Island on the Fraser River. One day, perhaps because I was upset, I threw out from the balcony onto the cemented driveway below a white mug which had the emblem of my old Washington-state apartment, "Chandler's Reach." My grandfather, Lolo Mac, had to sweep all the cracked bits and pieces away...

I made a conundrum with my parents. I slammed a door very violently downstairs. And I pretended that I was getting more violent. Then there was some police involvement...

I was hospitalized in the Richmond Hospital around spring of 1995, for a whole month. Dr. Ryder was my psychiatrist and she had a CAT scan (Computed Tomography) done on my brain. She quipped that my brain was "very big" and such was not unusual for "Orientals." I was not sure of the factualness of that statement and I knew that it was not really the size of the brain that mattered as much as the corrugation on the surface of the brain for the intelligence of a person. Perhaps, she was speaking figuratively. I asked her for copies of my scans, but she never gave them to me.

Dr. Ryder told me not to delve into anything "religious." I guessed that it was "reverse psychology" because from home I brought to my hospital bed books about Zen Buddhism.

The hospital food was not bad and in the beginning I ordered twice the regular meal until the staff restricted me to the regular volume. In the beginning, one of the older staff, a brunette with glasses, locked me in my room after she interrogated me about my being in Japan. I was not scared, but she was. Actually, when I first got to the hospital, I was put in an isolation room for a whole day and I did not trust the food which they gave me. Then there in that windowless room, Dr. Ryder gave me magazines about brand-new video games!

In the hospital ward were all sorts of people, including an East Indian teenage girl who said that she was at home not used to speaking "Indian"—whatever that non-linguistic term meant.

There were some old white men, including one who used an old tape recorder from another decade. Another one of them was a pervert. There was an Oriental who had a blank expression on his face. At the hospital, I became a friend of another patient, a fat teenage white boy with whom I played ping-pong in the recreation room there. But I was not really good at ping-pong.

Well, that hospital experience reminded me of the movie *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (1975). However, I knew that I was not really crazy...

Tita Zeny and Tito Ed, my neighbours of the Rosero family across the street from House Rideau, visited me at the hospital ward. And we sat together chatting in the cafeteria. Tita Zeny was a nurse at that hospital, in some other ward.

Incidentally, Tita Zeny was from the province Pampanga in the Philippines, and Tito Ed was from Bicolandia, or the multiprovincial Bicol Region, in the Philippines. They had been in Canada since the 1960's. Their common language was Tagalog, but their provincial languages were Kapampangan (Pampangueño) and Bikol (Bicolano), respectively. When I was attending Errington Elementary, they had a house whose picket fence was adjacent to the school yard. I visited them sometimes to eat their sweet yellow plums from their trees in the garden. Tita Zeny and Tito Ed would buy their second house, located at Rideau Drive, much later.

Before my terrible hospitalization, by the end of September and the beginning of October in 1994, I drove to Oregon in the United States with my maternal grandparents, Lola Bebe and Lolo Mac. The long drive was tedious and Lola Bebe, sensing

that feeling, asked at some point, "Are you tired?" to which I answered, "No." Then I asked my grandparents, "Are *you* tired?" And they replied, "No."

In some suburb of Portland, we visited and sojourned at the Medrano family house of my uncle and aunt, Tito Ed and Tita Evelyn. Tito Ed was an accountant and Tita Evelyn was a doctor, so they were relatively affluent with a large home. We visited a religious grotto surrounded by a statue-filled garden on top of a little mountain, reachable by elevator. I saw a curious sign attached to a tree trunk. It said, "Please do not pick the flowers," in three different languages—English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Then all of us together drove to the western Oregonian coast, there to see a beautiful sandy beach. Also, there was the Tillamook cheese factory, an interesting site. Then we went to the small town of Astoria to visit an old Filipino couple. Afterwards, we returned to the Portland suburb. Tito Ed's house sat on mountainous ground and around it were many mountains. All in all, it was a pleasant trip. At this time, I sported a mousy moustache, which a few weeks later I removed.

Several times, my mother hosted Japanese "homestay" students at House Rideau in Canada. The most memorable were the two girls from Ōsaka, Kaori Ishimoto and Noriko Kitaomo. They taught me to mix Dairy Queen milk ice cream with green tea powder; it was a wonderful combination. We chatted about many things. I asked Noriko-chan what her name meant because *nori* sounded like the word for seaweed in Japanese. She said that her parents just liked the sound and rhythm of the name: "Ki-ta-o-mo No-ri-ko."

Esperanto...

Mi memoras, ke al la Japaninoj mi iam menciis, ke la silaboj *ta ĉi cu te to* per la Moderna Japano estis antikve prononcataj kiel *ta ti tu te to* per la Prajapano, kaj mi menciis kelkfoje aliajn kelkajn lingvistikajn anekdotojn. Kaori diris, ke mia lingvistika scio estas profesia.

Kaori volis lerni pli da Anglalingvaj vortoj. Mi pripensis tion kaj pruntedonis al ŝi mian verdan libron *La Greka kaj la Latina en Scienca Terminologio* verkita de Oscar E. Nybakken. Mi opiniis, ke lernanto pri la Angla lingvo rapide amasigus novajn vortojn per lerni multajn klasikajn radikojn. Alia libro, kiun mi pruntedonis al ŝi, estis Budaisma libro paraleltekste per la Japano kaj la Angla. Tiun libron mi antaŭlonge prenis el hotelĉambro en Japanujo.

Kaori pli sentis koncernon pri aĝo. Kelkfoje ŝi diris, ke mi estas kiel infano, kaj iam ŝi diris, ke mi estas kiel patro.

Iam hejme mi rigardis televidprogramon de *Star Trek: La Venonta Generacio* kaj Noriko estis tie. Sur la ekrano vidiĝis Komandanto Riker (Jonathan Frakes), kiu estis blankhaŭta belulo. Mi demandis al Noriko ĉu ŝi ŝatas lin. Ŝi hezite neis.

Noriko estis bona desegnistino. Sur paperon ŝi perfekte desegnis mian vizaĝon. Mi mem ne alkutimiĝis desegni personojn kun perfektaj proporcioj ĉar mi preferis desegni aliajn objektojn kiel fantastajn mapojn kaj pejzaĝojn. Kaori avertis min iam, pri ke kiam mi ridas, mi ne tenu mian manon super mia buŝo kiel Japaninoj ofte faras. Mi eble imitis subkonscie.

Kaori ne kredis pri ŝanco. Noriko kredis pri la animoj aŭ

spiritoj de siaj prauloj, kiuj superrigardis vivantajn familianojn. Kaori ne sampensis. Japanoj havis diversajn opiniojn.

Kaori sciis, ke la Angla ne estas mia gepatra lingvo. Ŝi demandis al mi, «Ĉu estas vere, ke la Angla estas via gepatra lingvo?». Mi hezite jesis, sed eble mensoge. Iam, ŝi demandis, «Kio estas la lingvo en Filipinoj? Ĉu estas la Svahila?». Ŝi sciis, ke la Tagaloga ne estas Eŭropeca. Noriko jam lernis kelke da vortoj kaj frazoj de ĝi.

Fakte, Japanoj konsideris, ke Japanujo estis aparta de Azio, simile, sed ne ekzakte, kiel Britujo sentis sin aparta de Eŭropo. Se Filipinoj asociiĝus kun la Svahila, Afrika lingvo, tio signifus komplimenton.

Iam, mi ludis muzikon per la muzikdisko *Spirit of Polynesia* (*Spirito de Polinezio*), kiu estis kolekto da 38 tradiciaj kantoj, registritaj de David Fanshawe el vasta Polinezio. La Japaninoj estis en la kuirejo dum la muziko devenis el la salono. Kaori diris al mi, ke ŝi ne kontentiĝas pri tio. Alitempe, mi menciis pri la tradicia Japana kantostilo *Enka* kaj humure imitis ĝin. Kaori maltrankviliĝis. Eble, Japanaj junuloj, kiel Kaori kaj Noriko, sentis la mankon de pli neokcidenteskaj muzikoj. Ekzistis kaj ekzistas tro da malbela popmuziko ĉie.

Estis aliaj vizitantaj studentoj. Iu juna Japano trinkis lakton kaj multe ekzercis ĉe la balkono kaj ŝatis ludi golfon, ŝajne imitante Okcidentulojn. Alia studento, kun oranĝe tinkturita hararo, portis T-ĉemizon kun granda bildo de rozo sur la antaŭo aŭ alitempe kun bildo de Okcidenta popmuzikfamulo. Noriko demandis rilate al tiu bildo, «Ĉu vi estas gejo?». Li respondis, «Ne. Mi nur ŝatas lin». Eble ŝi, ankaŭ la alia

Japano, malrekte parolis al mi. Estis Orienta diskuto. Tiu studento havis akvarion kun longa strikolora fiŝo en ĝi.

The two girls, Kaori-chan and Noriko-chan, stayed in House Rideau three months, but by the fourth month decided to rent elsewhere. It might have been the East Asian Tetrophobia.

Esperanto...

Du aliaj Japanaj studentoj alvenis. Unuatage, ili ludis iom da gitaro en la salono ĉar ili enuiĝis. Tiam, miaj patrinliniaj geavoj ankoraŭ vivis kaj loĝis ĉe la Domo Rideau.

Estis alia Japana studento, kun kiu mi kaj la vizitanta Meksika inĝeniero Alfonso, ankaŭ tiam studento, iris al la Parko Stanley en Vankuvero. Li, la Japano, rimarkis, ke mi ne ofte eliris la domon ĉe Rideau. Li eble sciis la kialon.

Hirokata Sugiyama estis studento, kiu longtempe multjare loĝis ĉe la Domo Rideau. Li aspektis buldika kaj preskaŭ brunhaŭta. Li ne ŝatis paroli Angle kun mi. Li ŝatis manĝi eksterdome. Li ŝatis legi Japanajn komiksojn. Li ŝatis la nombron 14. Plejparte, li ŝajnis kiel soldato...

Iam, mi kaj Hirokata manĝis maizon sur spikoj. Mi diris la Japanan vorton por maizo, «Toumorokoŝi...». Mi rimarkis rilate al tiu vorto, «Kia longega!». Li respondis Japane, «Sō da ne» (Tiel estas).

Tiuj ĉiuj menciitaj studentoj venis al Kanado por studi la Anglan lingvon.

At this time, I had a black Toyota MR2, a small sports car. It

was a used car, my fourth car, which I sold when I later moved to the big city to the north as I sought a more pedestrian lifestyle. At first, I did not really use this car too much, but I did use it to get to my charcoal drawing class in Vancouver's Langara College. In that class, there were nude models.

My family had a regular, once-in-a-blue-moon visitor named Rex Pérez, who was the cousin of my Ferrer cousins. When I was a teenager in the 1980's, he, along with several sisters and his parents, would visit during summers at House Rideau. His family originally lived in Chicago, but later moved to the Seattle area. The kids were very close to my little brother Paolo and would play the then popular videogaming machine called Intellivision in the basement. I was, amongst them, what Filipinos called a '*saling pusà*, a Cheshire cat bystander.

Rex was a prolific artist with many talents. He baked fancy cakes, played classical piano exquisitely, and was very quick to learn new languages, of which the Mediterranean languages he preferred.

In the mid-1990's, he visited us a few times at House Rideau. He bedazzled other guests with his piano pieces. He was fluent in Spanish and Italian, and by this time, it seemed as though that he identified himself more as a Latino than a Filipino. He did find my acquaintance with Japanese culture intimidating. His parents wondered why it was that I, like Rex, had not yet any girlfriend. Rex said that I was like a "nun," which for him, a devout Roman Catholic with a Jewish-like attitude, was probably a compliment. Later, the two of us together ate in a Spanish restaurant in the Old Wild West town of Steveston in southern Lulu Island. Somewhat

irked, I told him that he looked like an "Indian." But actually, he looked like a Latino. He recommended obliquely that I study the Greek language based on my interest in the Oriental languages. He was an interesting, generous character. His favourite fruit was the fig, the quintessential Mediterranean fruit. He often brought as gifts bags of fruits, including figs, along with fancy European delicacies. Despite Rex's leaning to Europe, he was, like many Filipinos, evidently partly Chinese, although honestly, he looked more like a Latino, like a Mexican *mestizo*.

Whilst Rex had previously spent a significant amount of time in Italy, I was then on the other side of the world, in Japan.

Whilst back in Canada, I had long vacations betwixt jobs. I found one job as a programmer learning the C++ computer language in downtown Vancouver, in a very tiny company, Ticon Technology Incorporated, owned by a young Ukrainian-Australian, Terry Swiatsky. It was at Suite 560, 1050 West Pender Street. There was a Jewish-Canadian from Montréal, George Muenz, who was a job headhunter. One other programmer besides me was Jai Lad, an East Indian who had worked previously in Thailand as well as California and Germany, and had married a German girl, Erika. From this time on, I became a long-lasting buddy of his. He was a conservative gentleman with a British accent. The secretary-receptionist was Louise, a svelte, black-haired white woman, who was constantly on a diet; she was a regular customer at a subterranean Japanese restaurant, called Ichibankan, which boasted a revolving conveyor belt for luscious sushi, but all she usually ordered was pickled ginger.

During lunch break, I often ate at this most diverse salad bar,

a few city blocks away, in order to lose weight myself, in which goal I would duly succeed. Unlike many salad bars, this one had such a variety of ingredients that made a meal actually satisfying.

After work hours, I often took my black MR2 to the beaches at Spanish Banks and walked around there whether the sky was blue or not. Such was the pleasure of owning that car then. When I moved to Vancouver, I started taking the SkyTrain to work as I imitated my lifestyle back in Japan.

Eventually though, the product line of our company was bought out by an American company from California and we were all laid off. Terry went back to Australia.

Lojban...

.i mi daplu pe'a



Lakewood Manor

I found other jobs in the Lower Mainland. One I liked was at the top of a mountain near the campus of Simon Fraser University: Information Systems Management B.C. Corporation (ISM-BC), 8999 Nelson Way in Burnaby. It was somewhat like a Tibetan experience. The view of the majestic mountains elated me. They were a glorious backdrop for the futuristic-looking architecture of the buildings with their colourful murals. There, I met Alberto Ortega, a friendly, smiley Mexican; Andrew Kim, a cheerful Korean; and Xiang Yang, an affable Mandarin-speaker. There was also a pretty Romanian girl, Liliana Ciobanu, with her East European

mystique. Our jobs entailed teamwork using a weird computer language called Smalltalk.

Additionally, there were several overly Westernized Cantonese-Canadians, one of whom, Angela, was a flirt. And there was Steven Yap, who reminded me of arrogant Steve Louie back in my Gastown days. During break time, Yap's face was always in some sci-fi novel. He was fond of the sci-fi television show *Babylon 5* as much as I was. It was a show about heavily political inter-species affairs in outer space.

I wore a Panama Hat or Cuban Hat with a black band around it. One time, on my way home from the office, the bus driver of a public bus did not stop for me at the bus stop, maybe because he was jealous of my hat. In the ISM-BC office, I left my hat on my office counter, then one day, the black band went missing! Someone took it! What did it mean? I did not know that such a hat could invoke such jealousy...

Moma...

:: Aur manejer at ISM-BC waz :: Kenneth Chan. :: Hi waz stupid, ai tot, for meiking mai work gang work juring wikendz. Da problem wid meni Chainiz waz dat dei had a wik personaliti en avoided sex bai working hard for na rizon. Chainiz had a difikult taim ajasting tu da Nortamerikan envaironment. Dei didnt nou wen dei wer overduwing deir imiteishon ov Western pipol. Ai onli laikt Chaniz hu laikt saifai, den ai niu dat dei wer intelijent, krieitiv, en fiuchur-luking. Hawever, meni yirz laiter, Chainiz wud bi kating triz daun en tering old arkitekchur tu vent deir frastreishonz. ::

Then there was an awkward and awry job at TGI Technologies

Incorporated within a dilapidated area in the city, near Main Street, but at least it was close to some good Cantonese and Punjabi restaurants, as well as a comfortable Korean restaurant where there was a bright Korean waitress who taught me a little about Korean culture. My workplace was somewhat messy with lots of boxes strewn everywhere. In my cubicle was Van Nguyen, a confident Vietnamese-Canadian who was good with UNIX machines. There, the Cantonese-Canadians were *not* overly Westernized. Joe Leung exposed my true level of the Japanese language when he asked me to translate a whole webpage; I suppose that he was really encouraging me to pursue the language more, instead of working. Andy Wistrina was a Chinese-Thai who did not like travelling a lot because he liked to be close to a clean washroom; he went to the Chinese countryside one time. The workplace was unusual for a software house because the management was highly conscious of the clock and kept tabs on the working hours of the employees. I was more used to flextime. But my boss, Rod Thomson, was truly a wise man; he said to me:

"You can engineer your life the way you want it!"

Another job was at a computer-gaming company, Radical Entertainment Limited, within the tourist zone of Yaletown in Vancouver. There, I met some other software specialists: Ryan Bédard, an Anglicized French-Canadian; Ian Gipson, a serious Canadian *mulatto*; and Darwin Chau, a serious Hongkongese-Canadian. And there were the artists: Tony Da Roza, a suspicious Eurasian from Macao; and Ting Ting Chen, a cute Chinese girl who was fluent in Japanese. But in these times, I tended to be solitary like a bear. To Tony, though, I was a caged bird that needed to be freed, and indeed, he came

in one day with a real bird in a cage. He and others knew that I was an artist doing a highly technical job. In the year 2000, that job was my last real job...

Moma...

:: Ryan Bédard :: waz da smartest in mai work gang der at :: Radical. :: Hi slaitli hinted tu mi wan taim about baisexualiti, probabli bikoze ai waz wering perpol T-shirts ol da taim en bikoze hi niu dat ai waz born in da 1960'z. Hi en oderz laik :: Tony Da Roza :: wer mostli born in da leit 1970'z or erli 1980'z. :: Ryan :: had long blond heir. Hi samtaimz brot plastik toiz dat hi bot in da toi stor en pleid wid en displeid dem on hiz desk. Ya, :: Ryan :: en *ai* wer jast kidz... :: Ryan :: wan taim expleind tu mi hau da rein, wich evribodi in Vankuver kompleind about, waz a klenzing proses. Mach leiter, ai suspekted dat hi mait hav bin a :: Métis :: hu waz part-Kaukasoid en part-Amerindian... ::

I found it difficult to readjust to the now strange culture at these workplaces. All this time, Japan was at the back of my mind, forever etched in memory. The Japanese Dream became the Tibetan Dream.

Eventually, I was indefinitely on sabbatical.

For a decade from the 15th of September of 1996 until about the end of 2006, I lived in the big city on Canada's West Coast, specifically in East Vancouver, in a hippy-like district full of ancient "character homes." It was in the general area of Commercial Drive, Victoria Drive, and East Hastings Street. The place had the feeling of being in China, but at the same time in some European country, perhaps Italy, or even Poland

or Switzerland. So, it was the best of both worlds. The majestic snow-capped mountain range was a breathtaking view every time that I stepped out of the house on top of a hill as I readied to trudge down the slope.

Esperanto...

Tamen, tiu areo de Vankuvero ankaŭ ŝajne similis al Los-Anĝeleso ĉar ekzistis multaj Hispanikuloj kaj variaj etnoj ĉirkaŭmarŝantaj. Ekzistis veraj Meksikaj manĝaĵoj en restoracioj tie. Ekzistis eĉ Etiopia kuirado, kiun oni manĝis per nudaj manoj kaj plata pano nomita *inĝera*. Ankaŭ Araba kafejo ekzistis kun tapiŝo kaj kusenoj, kie oni povis sidi haremstile. Estis kuriozaj manĝejoj Grekaj, Italaj, Barataj, kaj aliaj...

Sed pli precize, Vankuvero estis la San-Francisko de Kanado pro multaj Ĉinoj kaj multaj gejoj.

Perhaps in a different perspective, my area of East Vancouver had the air of being in *Eurasia*. That term would be more accurate.

Esperanto...

Estis ja Eŭrazio...

I convened with my old Hongkongese friend Don Chan about every moon to watch the current cinematic extravaganza and to discuss deep, Star-Trekky philosophical things. Our regular haunt was an inexpensive Chinese restaurant called the On Lok Restaurant and Wonton House, frequently attended by all sorts of Chinese people, as well as handsome Italian men

who ate in secure solitude at a table, or gangs of racially mixed Canadian teenagers, or families of Amerindians, or sometimes some black people. The On Lok Restaurant and Wonton House had a very diverse crowd. Because Don and I had some very similar interests, our platonic relationship was very conducive to stimulating conversations. He was like an Americanized Chinese man who liked the idea of progress and of living in the future. He was on Earth really one of the few people to whom I could talk.

Don and I watched a lot of movies. He told me what he thought was my favourite movie. It was *The Fifth Element* (1997) with handsome Bruce Willis as Korben Dallas, Ian Holm as Father Vito Cornelius, and Milla Jovovich as the orange-haired alien beauty Leeloo. It was directed by the Frenchman Luc Besson. An interesting scene in the movie was an operatic aria sung by a beautiful blue-skinned alien diva in front of an affluent audience on a luxury hotel space liner, nostalgic of the Zeppelin. Don knew that I preferred *science fantasy*, but neither of us knew then the right terminology for the genre. We thought, like many North Americans, that there was *science fiction* and there was *fantasy*, but there was nothing in the middle.

Don and I discussed religion on many occasions. We both generally agreed that neither of us really liked what we called "shrink-wrapped" religions. Those religions were packaged deals created by other humans. Those religions came right "off the shelf" in the Religion Store. We both thought that religion should be a very dynamic and individualistic pursuit. Don had some past ephemeral experience with a Christian sect, probably Fundamentalist, which irked him. He knew that I was exploring Buddhism, but he found it too difficult to

gulp down when I tried to explain it to him. I showed him to my temple where my fellow meditators sat on a hardwood floor and meditated in the dark spacious hall with only candlelight. He was a bit scared. At the restaurant, he wanted me to explain the different branches or types of Christianity. And so I did. But Don still preferred, I thought, Star Trekky freedom over religion.

One time, I met a friend of Don. He was a light-complexioned, black-haired, Japanese *mestizo*, part-Japanese and part-Caucasian, named Koji Satō. Japanese called these *mestizos* 'hapa', a term borrowed from the Hawaiian language. Koji sat at our table in the On Lok Restaurant and Wonton House. Amazingly, his vigorous personality somewhat reminded me of myself. But I said to him, "You look more *Caucasian*..." Imitating my pronunciation, he said, "COW-casian..." Then he said, "COCK-asian..." He! He! He reminded me of Jon Genka in Japan. Jon was also a *mestizo*, but he was dark-skinned and partly sprang from Hawaii. He looked actually triracial, Australoid-Mongoloid-Caucasoid. And even though his hair was turning white, Jon was still handsome and showed youthful exuberance. There was another Japanese *mestizo*; his name was Benjamin Kenneth Mayer, who published an awe-inspiring video travelogue called *Benjamin Goes to Vienna, Austria* on YouTube. Young Benjamin was very light-complexioned and had dark, brown hair. He had a husky build. His eyes were very squinty.

Don Chan's eyes were not very squinty, just like mine. He looked like an Amerindian, but perhaps, really, he had Caucasoid ancestors who were maybe Portuguese from Macao, which was the neighbouring ex-Portuguese city-state colony near Hong Kong, which was the ex-British city-state

colony. So, perhaps, he was really a *mestizo*, unbeknownst to him. Culturally, Don was not really Chinese at all, but was a *Trekker*, like many young educated Chinese men in North America.

Once in a blue moon, I would also meet up with David Ho, the Hongkongese real estate guy, to get an update on each other. He was the kind of guy that would blow a lot of money on lavish entertainment. Back in university, he lived in an impressive home with his parents and other family members in the posh Shaughnessy area in Vancouver. He, since then, invested in his own houses. One time, he showed me his garden that had large jars with carnivorous plants, such as Venus Flytraps (*Dionaea muscipula*). What an interesting hobby it was for him! It was something which matched my personality. Back when we were still students at UBC, he showed me his stunning Chinese calligraphy on scrolls of paper...

David Ho was often critical about Vancouver and Canada in general. He yearned for the higher energy of the USA. I told him that our province B.C. was like Alaska, at the periphery or margin of civilization. He did not really buy that idea and went on saying that the Earth was spherical in shape and there was no real periphery of civilization or something to that effect.

I convened regularly with Jai Lad the East Indian as well, so he could give me a status on his career, his favourite subject. Usually, we preferred a Japanese restaurant to dine. Sometimes, I would meet him at his condominium in the Kitsilano area of Vancouver. It was near the beach. There, his strong German wife Erika would do most of the cooking.

Much of it was steamed or boiled vegetables, essentially German cuisine. What I liked about this intellectual couple was that they had a European outlook on life. They did not own a car. They did not watch North American television nor did they possess any television set. Jai was learning German and spoke to his two kids, Charlotte and Johanna, in German as much as possible. Jai was a subtle communicator.

Jai always preferred the term 'South Asian' to the term 'East Indian'. Perhaps, he wanted to de-emphasize the concepts of "Eastern" and "Indian," and emphasize "Southern" and "Asian." Not many "South Asians" were aware that they were mostly members of a *mestizo* race, a biracial mixture of black-haired white people, the Aryans, Caucasoids from long ago, and a kind of black people, the Australoids or Proto-Australoids from long ago. This race-mixing happened thousands of years ago when the Aryans invaded the Indian subcontinent, which was until then a haven for the black Australoids or Proto-Australoids. Well, such talking was the domain of anthropology.

Jai and I discussed religion several times. We both agreed that for India, it would be optimal to encourage Secular Humanism, or Buddhism. Jai often attended Lutheran worship on Sundays with his German wife Erika and their children. Jai was curious about Christianity as well. However, Japanese culture, which he linked with Zen Buddhism, a kind of Mahāyāna Buddhism which sprang from East Asia, highly attracted Jai.

Jai was multilingual. Aside from English, he spoke, with varying degrees of fluency, German and several East Indian languages, including Hindi. I tried to get Jai and Erika

interested in Esperanto, but with little success. Jai was somewhat of an Anglophile and was pro-English. At one point, Jai and Erika took some quick lessons in French, on which they decided instead of Japanese because it seemed easier. Their eldest daughter Charlotte was learning to be trilingual with German at home, and English and French in immersion school. Perhaps my attraction to Esperanto over natural languages proved that I was more idealistic...

Jai and I talked about Europe a few times. He, having lived in Germany, and I, having vacationed in several countries there, knew what it was like there. Europe was full of old architecture. We discussed that Europeans, unlike the Japanese, liked to "hide" their technology. Europeans thought that technology often stuck out too conspicuously. They worried about blending designs, of the old and the new. Japanese, I thought, liked to show stark contrast.

Jai worked in the computing, technology sector. However, it was interesting that he disliked taking a camera to take pictures during his trips and vacations. He told me that he preferred to use his memory. I told him that photographs were able to trigger memories. Jai had a paradoxical view of technology...

An interesting feature about my closest friends was that they were all relatively short in height, hovering around my 164 cm, although my B.C. driver's license said "165 cm." Many believed that shorter people looked younger.

In my neighbourhood at Lakewood Drive, I met a tough hermit, Fred Chin, a Cantonese-Canadian. He was a bit of a hot-head when it came to debates. He was a man of science.

Contrastingly, his brother Giles Chin was a man of art. Giles liked discussing religion and philosophy in a feathery way. Giles had a white girlfriend Robbie. Giles was an Apple Mac user. Fred and Giles had an elder brother who had dark haloes around his eyes, which made him look more East Indian. He was married to a white Canadian. Their daughter, Fred's niece, was a tall Eurasian. Fred told me that he had some "Malay" ancestors.

There was also skinny, bespectacled, brown-haired Charlie who was born in Poland. He was an intellect with potential, but was a habitual drug user. Fred often chatted with him at nearby Joe's Café. Charlie still remembered some Polish from his childhood. He came to Canada as a prepubescent. The designs of motored vehicles were his prominent interest. He said that he lived in a van.

1175 Lakewood Drive Vancouver, B.C. Canada V5L 4M3
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Above was my home address, to which my brother Fernando's wife Lucinda jokingly referred as "The Lakewood Manor," built in the year 1927 or 1928. I lived on the ground floor "Garden Suite," and Fernando's family, which included my nieces Tria and Calla, their dog Eddy, and their cat Oscar, lived upstairs.

Sam and Brenda were an interesting couple down the block from me. Sam, a short man who was even shorter than me at 164 cm, was a Jewish man from Pennsylvania who collected antiques. Sam and Brenda had spent some time in Japan teaching English. Bian from Mainland China and her Jewish-Canadian husband Jaier were also my neighbours; they had

two bright biracial kids Sukai and Longxi. Also my neighbours were Angela Fell, Lynn, and Melody. Angela was a *mulatta* from Chile; she was a spiritual person who reminded me of the famous American talkshow host, Oprah Winfrey. Her silent husband's name was Daniel. Lynn was a nice lady, divorced, living with her son. Melody was a nice, "yang" girl, who was a blondie. She adopted Oscar the cat. There was also this French-language-educated, mocha-skinned Moroccan lady, with whom I was enamoured, at a used book store on Commercial Drive. At another used book store, which sold spiritual books, was Abraham, a Nigerian ex-pastor who was well attuned to many things spiritual and paranormal, Western and Eastern. He originally had a very comfy two-storey store, but sold it and moved to a smaller boutique at the south end of Commercial Drive near the Chongqing Szechuan restaurant where, incidentally, my family frequently dined.

Several restaurants I frequented were On Lok, Penny's, and Hollywood Café.

Hollywood Café had good Western food in Hong Kong style, as well as more traditional Chinese and South-East Asian cuisine, specifically Malaysian and Singaporean. The surroundings were clean and elegant. The prices were not bad. And the waiters and waitresses were young and beautiful, dressed in white shirts and black pants. One of the waitresses was studying Spanish and asked me, because she knew that I was a *mestizo*, to conjugate a Spanish verb on a piece of paper. Several days later, I gave her a brochure on Esperanto because it seemed to me that that Germanized-Slavicized Latinate language matched the Chinese character more and was already spreading in China. The title of the

brochure was *Esperanto for Beginners* by Montagu C. Butler of the Canadian Esperanto Association. That waitress, though, had a sister living in Peru where she wanted to visit.

(Another language that interested me then was Volapük. The creator Father Johann Martin Schleyer (1831/1912) included many short and plump Germanic words from English and German, but also made certain Latinate words, mainly from French, shorter and plumper to look more Germanic. In Esperanto, whose creator was Dr. Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof (1859/1917), at least the Latinate words were still very recognizable if one knew French, Spanish, Italian, or some other Romance language.)

Shirley was a long-time waitress at Penny's, also a Chinese restaurant. She was a Mandarin-speaker, later learning Cantonese, and became my friend.

At the On Lok Restaurant and Wonton House, the service was more efficiently robotic, but at the same time it had the feel of being in Mainland China. The waitresses, adorned in red dresses with white frills, and waiters, adorned in white shirts and black pants, seemed as if they were "fresh off the boat" from China. The manager was a very tall, slim Chinese man who seemed very scrupulous.

I did my restaurant-hopping night and day, and for years lived off restaurant food. I often ate at a table in secure solitude at restaurants. And often I had an interesting book to read before and after my meal. It was a beautiful life. For years, imitating the lifestyle of the Old World, I lived without an automobile and walked and walked. That time also was, for me, a time of free sexual experimentation, which, I opined, alluded to certain Hindu traditions aiming at full

satiation to get rid of sexual desire and the feeling of virginity. Public saunas and Jacuzzis of bathhouses were like monasteries with naked monks, some with elaborate tattoos... It was the Penis Museum...

Moma...

:: Diz bat hausez wer smorgasbordz ov penisez ov diferent kolorz, sheips, en saizes. Meni ov da men akchuali enjoyd deir sexualiti der. A fiu men jast wanted tu tok tu oderz. Oderz jast laikt fizikal akshon en disdeind toking oltugeder. Sam men wer obviusli relijos, from deir richualistik akshonz or ornamenteishonz, laik istern tatuz or ringz on jenitalia. Da spektakolz remained mi ov da saifai novel *Triton* bai :: Samuel R. Delany. :: On Neptun'z mun Triton waz a shilded koloni wer pipol wokt araund neiked in fri sexualiti... ::

I had been wanting to visit the erotic temples of Khajuraho in the district of Chhatarpur in the state of Madhya Pradesh in India. Those temples depicted sexual scenes carved into the structures. Why they were there was still a mystery. The site was about 620 kilometres southeast of Delhi.

Around the community in Vancouver, I took adult extracurricular classes. Britannia Elementary School hosted these classes. I took Coast Salish Wood Carving, wherein the instructor was Amerindian. I took also an eight-week, two-days-a-week Mandarin language class. The teacher said that I had good pronunciation. Then I took a clay pottery class in which most of the participants were women, which somewhat intimidated me.

Esperanto...

Ekde 1997, mi partoprenis Esperanto-klubon ĉe Vankuvero. Ĉiumonate, ni praktikis paroli Esperanton en la rapidvorejo Makdonaldo, aŭ en la Honkongaj restoracioj On Lok kaj Hollywood Café, aŭ en iu Vjetnama restoracio. Ofte partoprenis mi; kaj Jürgen Kuhl, kiu estis Germano; kaj Davide Turcato, kiu estis Italo; kaj Brian Kaneen, kiu estis Brito el antikva Manksinsulo. Ĉiuj estis junaj en spirito. La aliaj tri estis miaj instruistoj pri la internacia lingvo. Still at this stage, I was not very age-conscious. I did not hesitate to learn speaking Esperanto from older Esperantists. Davide Turcato was in his forties. Jürgen Kuhl and Brian Kaneen were already in their sixties. Brian said that I was only a "bebo" (baby) or "bubo" (brat) in my thirties. I believed, though, that wisdom and age were independent of each other.

Jürgen Kuhl insinuated that I seemed more Japanese than Filipino. Jürgen liked talking about Jews and Israel, but he proclaimed no religion. His political views were radical and involved experimental ideologies, including *anarchism* and *syndicalism* amongst others. He advocated the ideology of Eŭgeno Lanti, a very political Esperantist in the early 20th century.

Davide Turcato was a software writer and used the Prolog computer language for his work on Artificial Intelligence. He shuttled back and forth between Vancouver and his hometown of Modena in Italy.

Brian Kaneen was a Brit-like person who was interested in religion, especially Anglican and Roman Catholic. Brian was a German-language teacher and an all-around linguist. He had no Ph.D. degree, but it seemed as though he had it.

My first Esperanto meeting was in a bohemian café called La Quena on hippy Commercial Drive in Vancouver. Then later, we held meetings in fast-food restaurants or Chinese restaurants. Often, we were at SFU, Simon Fraser University, up on a mountain with a majestic view...

Esperanto...

Ĉe la Interreto, mi renkontis aliajn esperantistojn. Bertilo Wennergren, kiu estis Svedo, estis esperantlingva rokmuzikisto, kiu vere spertis pri la gramatiko de Esperanto. Li instruis min pri la ĝusta prononco de la lingvo. Manuel Campagna estis humurulo el orienta Kanado; multe koncernis lin seksa orientiĝo. Simono Pejno estis serioza inteligenta Anglo, kiu loĝis en Germanujo. Li spertis pri komputiloj kaj politiko. Li verkis en bona, malfacile legebla Esperanto. Li kvazaŭdiris, ke li preferis la kantecajn ondetojn de la Ĉina lingvo. Kaj ekzistis aliaj grupanoj.

Brian Kaneen once invited me to his church. It was when I was well on my way to becoming a truly Esperantic Being, an Esperantist, an Esperanto-speaker. He knew that Eastern religions, especially Buddhism, attracted me. Anyway, Brian's place of worship stood in Vancouver's Chinatown. It was the St. James Anglican Church on 303 East Cordova Street. It had a very interesting architecture—an Art Deco variant on Byzantine design, built in 1935/1937. Brian mentioned that there were factions within the Anglican community, and he was of the "Anglo-Catholic" faction whose beliefs and practices leaned toward the Catholic, rather than the Protestant, heritage and identity. Indeed, St. James was full of grandiose rituals, including lots of smoky incense, and parts

of the music were in Latin. On our way out of St. James, Brian met a friend. Together, the three of us walked to Brian's condominium and there had lunch—the Biryani Rice which Brian's husky Anglo-Saxon friend, seemingly a secret Hindu, brought along. Brian gave me a choice of teas available, and I chose liquorice, which he then served to me in a black mug. A fourth person, Brian's Hispanic roommate, who looked skinny white and was probably an Argentine, was in the condominium. He cooked a little something—tasteless ground beef. He was not too enthused about Esperanto, Brian explained. At that time, I was wearing a white and purple T-shirt that was too tight on me, and I felt ridiculous.

Esperanto...

Alia Esperantisto, kiun mi renkontis en la reala vivo, estis José Tlatelpas. Li estis Meksikano, kiu scipovis ankaŭ la Aztekan (Nahuatl). Li estis bona poeto kaj intelektulo, sed la Angla lingvo restis fremda al li; li diris al mi, «La Angla ne estas en mia universo».

Mi renkontis la filon de José. La filo estis dekelkajaraĝa, duone Meksikano kaj duone Japano de la indiĝena Ainu-heredaĵo. Li kreskis en Meksiko kaj restis en Kanado dum iomete da tempo. Kiam mi renkontis lin, li estis ironta al Japanujo por enmigri tien. Mi certigis al lia patro José, ke Japanujo estas bona loko kun pli da spiriteca dimensio.

Kiel José, ankaŭ mi verkis poemojn kaj mi konsideris unu hajkon kiel mian plej bonan poemon per Esperanto:

flosanta urbo
inter la blankaj nuboj

kamparo sube

(a floating city
among the white clouds
fields below)

Esperanto...

Pro koincido, mia familinomo «Medrano» konsistiĝis el du Esperantaj vortoj. «Medo» estis alkoholaĵo el fermentita mielo kaj akvo. Kaj «rano» estis la fama verda amfibio. Do, «Medrano» estis tipo de ebria rano... Ha! Ha!

On Usenet, I regularly attended soc.culture.filipino, also known as SCF. There, I encountered several weird people. Foremost was a linguist colleague of mine, Christopher Sundita, also known as Dalubwikà, a polyglot Filipino-American from Washington State. Dalubwikà was a boy expert on all things linguistic and he specialized in Philippine languages. He was loyal to the interests of minority Philippine languages. His mindset tended towards localism, instead of globalism. He preferred slang and jargon, over standard language. In the realm of auxiliary languages, he liked Interlingua better than Esperanto.

On SCF, I also met Eric Cardenas, also known as Johnny Thor, a Filipino-Australian who liked corny jokes and was an expert writer in deep Tagalog. He said that he worked for Microsoft there in Sydney, Australia, but likely not as a programmer. Another excellent writer in deep Tagalog was John Cristóbal, an intellectual Filipino-American, who believed that the Virgin Mary was the fourth person of God. And there was Randy Hornibrook, also known as Congenital

Kanô, who was a middle-aged white American married to a *Filipina* and living in California. He was an excellent writer in English and was a very political man. His friend Tansóng Isdâ ("Copper Fish") was a funny, portly Filipino-American with a Cadillac view; he worked for IBM and also lived in California. Ferdinand Solis was an eccentric poet who was in the navy or marines or some service. He was a Filipino-American whose writing was very lucid and imaginative. Ferdinand hinted that East Asian logograms were just "figures of speech." KJ, another Filipino-American, was someone from California who seemed always inebriated. Renowl in California was a young Filipino-American family man, who was an extremist anti-American and anti-Western radical. Dr. Norman Owen was an American professor from a Hong Kong University and specialized in Philippine history. He was often at odds with Congenital Kanô. Kalani Mondoy was a mild-mannered man whose identity, he felt, was more Hawaiian than Filipino, and he knew the Hawaiian language. Isla Maya, a *Filipina*, was a jet-setting careerwoman who shuttled betwixt Hong Kong, Manila, and Paris, or so she claimed. Sylvia Knörr was a very smart German lady, who had a domineering sway over the whole group. Sylvia liked Philippine culture, especially the music.

Immersion in Filipiniana inspired me to write what I considered my best Tagalog poem, sprinkled with controversial technical words from *New Handy Webster's Dictionary: English-Tagalog Tagalog-English* by María Rosario Enríquez and M. Jacobo Enríquez. It was an odd dictionary because many of the words seemed more like proposals than words in actual use...

Tagalog...

Nagliliwalíw sa Sansinukob
ang halintigál na panuós,
ang buntót ay labás dídagipík.
Nagháhanáp siyá ng liboy dagítabbaláni
galing sa malayong talumpón.

(Traversing the Universe
is the gyroscopic computer,
ejecting plasma at its tail.
It searches for electromagnetic waves
from the distant star cluster.)

I visited other bulletin boards on the Internet. For a while, I monitored the Dilà ("Tongue") discussion list in Yahoo. It was a discussion list that promoted the minority languages in the Philippines. They were mostly Filipinos, many of whom were in America and in the Philippines. Dalubwikà was there, as well as his Italian-American research linguist friend, Jason Lobel, who once made the analogy of a rainbow garden in reference to minority languages. Tim Harvey, a white American computer professional, had a leading role in the discussion list. He was married to a *Filipina* from Cebu, where the minority language Cebuano was spoken. He was adamant about their cause and dissuaded the role of Tagalog, also known as Filipino language, for Filipinos. He did not like me in the discussion list because I was a Tagalog, although I knew that I really did not identify with that ethnic group. Little did they know that I was more like a Euro-Chinese in identity, or even a Japanoid looking for his long-lost brown Austronesian identity, or even a Chinese-Indian with a more spiritual mindset. Furthermore, I made an intense ad campaign for Esperanto in the discussion list and some of the

members did not like it. They were localists, not globalists. I thought that the members had a distorted, unrealistic view about the Philippines. Eventually, I left the discussion list because I felt that it was not for me.

I also frequented the more luminous Eastasianconlangs discussion list in Yahoo. There, I met other conlangers who specialized in East Asian designs. There was Eamon Graham who was the moderator, an Irishman living in France. He created the interesting Bauhinese language. He had an expert knowledge of art terminology such as 'expressionism' and 'impressionism'. In the discussion list also was the promising teenage Filipino-Canadian poet Kevyn Scott Calanza Bello, who later would read many sacred books of different religions; a real seeker he was to be. I also frequented the Conlang discussion list at Brown University. There, I met Henrik Theiling, a creative, intellectual German, who created one of my favourite exotic non-Eurocentric conlangs, which was Qbpyn|gài. There was also Robert Jung, a blind American conlanger. Hanuman Zhang was a Chinese-Californian, reportedly with some Malay blood, who complained that forces "overfreighted" Western cultures and languages around the world; he was a visionary poetic conlanger with a great sense of humour. John Cowan was a famous Lojban activist. (Lojban was a conlang with incredible ideas and it was challenging to learn.) On the Auxlang discussion list at Brown University was a very public Esperanto activist, Donald Harlow.

I also often lurked in sci.lang on Usenet. There, people with a special talent in linguistics regularly clustered. It was like a university. A memorable personality was Lee Sau Dan, located in Hong Kong. He frequently complained about the

Eurocentricity of existing auxiliary languages, such as Esperanto and other so-called "Euroclones." He often criticized people with overly Western perspectives and enjoyed the repartee. He liked Lojban because it was not so Eurocentric. I once suggested to him to create his own language instead of just complaining. This contact and others inspired me to create my own supercharged conlang called Vling, my own model of what a good East Asian design would be like.

I also visited [alt.language.artificial](#) on Usenet a few times to check on the projects of other imaginative conlangers. Incidentally, there I met a Chinese person, Lan Yu, from Shanghai. This fellow expressed that Interlingua was more attractive to him than Esperanto, but could not really give details as to why. Perhaps it was a tacit attraction to Interlingua's more organic structure. Reportedly, Lan Yu had the experience of living in Europe.

On a system called Xanga, I blogged and encountered interesting people who knew me as Viktoro, my Esperanto pseudonym. There was Citrinetopaz, later changed to Amethystring, who was a homemaker in a small town in Japan. There was Naomiwoman, who also lived in Japan; her English was spontaneous and free in that she did not really care if her grammar and spelling were correct or not. There was Zarathustra, alias Gavin Banns, a black-haired intellectual artist living in rustic England; he somewhat reminded me of myself. There was Björn Candel, a Swede who taught English in the Middle East. Fauquet was an ancient Frenchman with a Frenchman's taste. Kensio W. was a Singaporean Chinese who worked in China, Mongolia, and other places; I thought of him quite Westernized. Jemanjam

was a timid East Indian man. There was also an artist from America, Phil Dynan, who liked showing off his art; he was a bit of an exhibitionist, but disappeared early in Xanga. I also met this stout Polish-Canadian Damien Ponech from Canada's Capital. He was a lingo fanatic like myself, and was a hobbyist *conlanger*, like myself. So we had lots of things in common. He eventually moved to the West Coast with his stout girlfriend Sonia.

There were other groups on the Internet that I attended, but I need not mention.

Whilst I lived in North America, I communicated with Maruyama-sensei, my Japanese-language teacher in MSKK, several times by postcards. She in fact married a white Canadian, a big man, and moved to Vancouver. She visited me once at Lakewood Drive just to say hello. By that time in the spring of 1997, it was the first time that I had ever shaved my head. Maybe Maruyama-sensei was not really surprised. She later went to Paris for a while to study French. It was she who encouraged me to further study the French language, which I did. I let the hair on my head grow back.

Maruyama-sensei wrote me a Japanese letter about white chocolates. It was not reverse psychology that she, as well as others in Japan, was luring me towards *white chocolate languages* like French, Spanish, Italian, and the rest of the Romance language family that had at least 47 different flavours and up to a billion native speakers. Such was really the predilection of many Japanese, and they knew that English was not a *luxury*, but a *working* language that they had learnt at varying degrees since Junior High School.

Noriko Kitaomo revisited Canada, to see a "rock concert" she said. She brought me a box of *yatsushashi*, a Japanese dessert delicacy and pairs of socks that were a bit small for me.

Noriko-chan knew that I did not change my socks as frequently as I should because I had a favourite pair of husky grey socks. I think that she liked the rainy days in Vancouver. She said that she had a stint as a waitress in Kyōto, the cultural capital of Japan. She left Vancouver after a few days' stay. Much later, she visited Indonesia. She sent me a photograph by electronic mail. She then got married in Japan. Through the Internet to my mother, she sent a photograph of her and her new husband in traditional Japanese costumes.

Esperanto...

Iam, pro la Japana tradicio pri donacoj, mi donacis al Noriko belegan Eskiman rondeskan ŝtonan statueton de nigra-griza koloro. Post kiam ŝi revenis al Japanujo, mi provis komuniki al ŝi interrete, sed mia impresio estis, ke ŝi ne ŝatis tajpi kaj preferis la arton pri kaligrafio.

In 1999, after 3 days in cosmopolitan Singapore, I visited Bali, Indonesia, for several weeks, mainly with the intention to explore, as a kind of archaeological expedition, Hindu temples there. The winding roads through the mountains of the beautiful rice terraces were nauseating, though, as I sat in my tour bus... One time, the bus stopped and I ran to the exit in order to get outside to vomit. But the young Indonesian male tour guide stood in my way, so that I started vomiting in the front area of the bus. Well, some Indonesian workers from outside the bus took some *black* earth to put over the vomit on the floor of the bus and swept to clear away the mess as if there were a spiritual attribute to that activity. The mostly

North American busload of people did not really say much about the whole affair. The entrance of the bus was on the left side of the vehicle because the driver's side was on the right in Indonesia, where people drove on the left side of the road.

One time, in Bali, a Spanish-speaking family entered the bus before an excursion whilst the bus was still mostly empty. They could not speak English. The Indonesian tour guide was trying to tell them, in English with a hard Indonesian accent, that the instructional language for that particular excursion was English and that they should get off the bus and find a Spanish-speaking tour operator, which did exist there. I was sitting a few seats farther behind and to the righter side of them. I wanted to get up and translate for them in whatever oral Spanish that I could muster. But I did not want to interrupt. Eventually, bewildered the Hispanic family got off the bus.

The rest of my stay in Bali was interesting and relaxing. I really did not have to do anything to enjoy my stay. One time, in a lonely part of the beach, an Indonesian man wearing a loincloth entered the wavy water and stripped naked to wash himself there. I was sitting on a garden chair under a shady tree like Robinson Crusoe. Then a couple of middle-aged Indonesian women wandered along the coast looking for people who wanted a massage. Bali was a quiet place if one were away from other tourists.

I liked the food in Indonesia. I mostly ate in the restaurant of the Holiday Inn Resort Bali Hai, now called Holiday Inn Resort Baruna, where I stayed (Jalan Wana Segara 33, Tuban 80361, Bali, Indonesia). I usually ate all alone, but I never felt lonely because probably there were "brownish" people around the

area with a sense of humour.

I liked the Indonesian language. There, I bought a book from a bookstore. It was *Rangkuman Pengetahuan Alam Lengkap*, a science book for Grades 4, 5, and 6 ("untuk sekolah dasar kelas 4, 5 dan 6"). I could not find, however, any book in the Balinese language, the local language of the island.

Indonesians were anthropologically mostly Southern Mongoloids, often called "Malayo-Polynesians." Some of them had Northern Mongoloid infusion as one could tell from their squintier eyes and often lighter skin tone, but some of these *mestizos* had squintier eyes and a darker skin tone. Southern Mongoloids usually had rounder eyes and were yellowish brown in skin colour. To the very eastern part of the islands were Melanesians, or "Papuan," whom one Indonesian tour guide incorrectly designated as "Negroes." East Timor was a Portuguese colony, so perhaps some Indonesians had a bit of Portuguese ancestry. Centuries ago in the Indonesian islands, there were Arab and East Indian traders and missionaries, being anthropologically perhaps Mediterranean Caucasoids with or without some Australoid infusion. And amongst the Arabs, being genetically mostly Mediterranean Caucasoids, there existed further down some of their ancestral trees probably Negroid genes, aside from Australoid. Indeed, there were many different kinds of "browns" and "blacks."

Indonesians were mostly Muslims, but Bali was a Hindu enclave. Another jungle island, Ambon, was partly Christian. Many natives still practiced folkloric Animistic beliefs. There were Chinese in Indonesia and they had different religions, including Buddhism. One time, the Indonesian government outlawed Chinese logographic writing throughout the islands

for various reasons, including that such form of script encouraged illiteracy and division amongst peoples, et cetera...

When I returned to Canada, I developed a nervous habit in that every morning when I brushed my teeth, I would gag as if I were to vomit. The habit would last for years. Maybe, it was about Volapük... (Indonesia was a Dutch colony. Back in 1995, I ventured into Amsterdam in the Netherlands and saw that Indonesian restaurants were quite common there.)

Back in Canada, my Japanese friend Juichi Takahashi visited me twice since I came back from Japan. He liked kayaking and camping out in the natural wilds of Canada. He spent some time in a Florida university to get another degree and now he worked for Sony Corporation in Japan. I wondered if his mastery of Mandarin became of service to him in his new workplace. He got married and had a daughter. He lived in what Japanese called a *manshon*, which was really a condominium unit.

Takahashi-san and I discussed Esperanto on his second visit. I did not really know if he had heard about it before. But I showed him some literature about the language. We discussed the fact that the question marker "ĉu" usually came at the beginning of the sentence, whilst in Japanese the question marker "ka" came at the end. The placement in Esperanto did not please him. Then, I told him that I was studying also French and Spanish. He mentioned that the only rich Spanish-speaking country that he knew was Spain. Probably, he was not aware of Argentina, which was like Canada. Anyway, what did being "rich" mean? Also, I told him that I was learning these European languages because of the vast

volume of Graeco-Latin cognates with English. Indeed, that logic made sense.

Takahashi-san was learning English, more and more by reading *Harry Potter* books. (This peculiarity would inspire me years later to learn Indonesian in order to read *Harry Potter* books in Indonesian.)

One sunny day, we went to the On Lok Restaurant and Wonton House in the neighbourhood. After I ordered from the Chinese waitress, Takahashi-san said to me, "You learned..." He thought that we were speaking some kind of Chinese, but it was broken English. Ho! Ho!

Takahashi-san left a small box, part of his camping gear, in the laundry room next to my suite. There was, amongst other things, a rod-shaped cigarette lighter inside. Anyway, he e-mailed me from Japan that he did "unintentionally" leave the box behind in Canada. So, he requested as a favour for me to send the box to his address in Japan. And so I did. Indeed, it was Japanese "double entendre" and subtlety at work again. Was war a form of mass sexual activity?

Hirotada Sugiyama had been staying at House Rideau for over five years by then. When my parents visited me at Lakewood Manor, Hirotada came along. In the so-called "Garden Suite" where I lived, I made Hirotada watch the video of *Blade Runner*. My place looked Japanese. I knew that he missed his home country. Soon, he went back home to Japan. His hometown was Hiroshima...

In 2002, I attended meditation classes at the Yan Viriya Thai Buddhist Temple in the city. It had spacious hardwood floors

with which my eyes and feet were enamoured. There, I met some interesting people. Chand Shekher and Chandra Shekher were an East Indian couple who once resided in Montréal. Chand was an intellectual engineer who knew Hindi and French, besides English. Chandra was a flirt from Trinidad.

There was Dr. RANG Pham, a divorced Vietnamese acupuncturist, who had an interest in Ancient Egyptian relics and was previously a software writer; he was a fan of the French language and was a prior resident of Montréal as well. Knowing that I had some knowledge of Ancient Egyptian, he once asked me to try to translate some mystical Ancient Egyptian text.

There was also mocha-toned, bearded Pedro Mora, a personable, wandering Ecuadorian, part Inca, who once knew Esperanto. He was a very political man with very new ideas. Despite his meagre income, he seemed to thrive. Another was Paulette Marchetti, a vegetarian French-Canadian massage therapist. Her ancestors were Corsican French; thus, that heritage explained her Italian-sounding surname.

Sylvia was a German lady whose occupation was being a real clown at children's parties, or so she said.

Cecine Lam was a quiet Chinese girl who could speak Mandarin, Cantonese, and Vietnamese, aside from English.

And there was Staci Scheitel, a German-Canadian girl who spent years in Korea, could speak Korean, and had married a Korean. She thought that I should learn Korean and gave me a

big book called *Speaking Korean* by Francis Y. T. Park.

Nicole Watson was a blondie Canadian who was well travelled and seemed affluent. She later moved to Australia. She once showed a shocking photograph of her and a group of orange-robed monks dipping in a river in Thailand. She was, for me, the Paragon of Blonde Beauty...

There was a curious couple, the handsome white-haired Polish Adam Kowalski and his Cantonese wife Candy. They had a handsome, tall, black-haired biracial son Morgan, who was a prodigy. I thought that he was unusual because on one side of his head, amongst his fresh, straight black hair, was a small patch of white hair.

Additionally, there was the generous Vietnamese couple, Bob Nguyen and Juliette Luu-Nguyen, who later took over the administration of the classes. Juliette was a French-language professor at a university. She grew up in Paris, France. They had a big, spacious house in Burnaby, B.C., Canada. There was plenty of room for walking meditation in there...

I cannot forget Ajan Bhoontam, the Thai monk who gave me the big Buddha head sculpture. There was a tall, white kid named Don who was there at the time that he gave it to me on the upper floor of the temple.

At the temple was plenty of meditation, sitting and walking. We learnt to chant in Pali, the ancient liturgical language of Theravāda Buddhism. Thai monks used Pali, which was an East Indian language; normally, of course, they spoke their native Thai.

Back from a trip to the Philippines in 2003, I decided to start shaving my head every month. I liked the bristled, Velcro look on top of my head.

In the summer of 2004, I took a watercolour painting class. It was a bus ride south of my neighbourhood. It was a small class headed by an art teacher named Craig Hart. "Mistakes are meaningful" was one thoughtful expression that he liked. There, I rediscovered my painting abilities. One of my paintings looked too Oriental, which disconcerted Craig a little.

Around the last quarter of 2004, I joined a political activism group called MAWO (Mobilization Against War and Occupation). They were mostly anti-war enthusiasts in their twenties; they included names like Ivan, Kira, Mike, Adrian, Nicole, Alison, and Ali. One particular memorable individual was Aaron Mercredi, a Métis—*mestizo*—who was part Irish, Cree, and Chippewa. The term "hybrid vigour" or "heterosis" was evident in his appearance. The group regularly met in a chamber near the Britannia Public Library. At the time, I was fond of wearing my fancy brown Aussie hat and the black Outback jacket which I inherited from Hirotada Sugiyama.

Whilst Amazon, a megabookstore on the Internet, was a convenient way to shop for brand-new books, and I bought plenty, I still often wandered the city looking for second-hand bookstores. Some amazing books that were out of print I obtained from AbeBooks on the Internet. But there were the two downtown bookstores, Bollum's and Chapters, which I frequented for brand-new books. In those "Good Ol' Days," one could sit on a nice comfy couch under "living-room lighting" whilst reading books which one pondered to buy or

not. Near the reading area was a café where one could drink hot chocolate. Downtown was also Virgin Megastore where one could listen to music disks at one of the many booths whilst one pondered to buy or not.

I often visited the Vancouver Art Gallery in downtown Vancouver. I went more frequently when entry was by donation only and not by the regular fare. Therein I saw many art masterpieces, such as Impressionist paintings and other paintings from the 19th century, which was a favourite era of mine.

Living at Lakewood Manor felt like the Old World. I thought that I would live there for the rest of my life. I imagined that some many years or decades later, a war would ravage North America, and there in that house I would be trapped, living like a Native Indian.

Throughout this chapter of my life at Lakewood Manor, I was in minimal contact with the media, perhaps an hour at most everyday, but usually less. My repertoire was mostly the TV5 international French network, which allowed me to ameliorate my knowledge of French, especially the Parisian variety. Europe was full of festive castle colour at TV5. My secondary source of television entertainment came from the Multicultural Channel, wherein I could watch shows in a rainbow of languages from all over the world. A few times, I listened to Radio El Fonógrafo from Mexico City via the Internet. There, it was a warm and sunny kind of colour from the deserts, jungles, and highlands of that magical *república*. Additionally, there was Pola Radio from Poland; through the Internet, it broadcasted Esperanto newscasts that made me feel that I was right there in rugged Eastern Europe with the

voices of Barbara Pietrzak, Gabriela Kosiarska, and others of their team. Also from the Internet was Radio France Culture, a veritable *chocolaterie* of voices and sounds. Worthy of mention was APTN, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, which featured very original and interesting programming, often in aboriginal languages, about the Native Indians, the Métis, and the Inuit; a memorable show recorded a Haida Indian family having a smoked salmon picnic on one of the Queen Charlotte Islands, natively called Haida Gwaii. Additionally, I did watch the Space Channel for reruns of various incarnations of *Star Trek*. I was also a so-called "VIP member" of the Internet radio service Live365.com. Therein were bountiful founts of exotic music, including Thai pop music and French vintage music. Truly, the computer and the television competed for my entertainment time.

Tagalog...

Noóng Setyembre ng 2001, pinutol ng hipag ko ang isáng punò sa paligid ng aming bahay. Nang lumabás akó ng aking pintô, sumigáw akó, "You cut the tree down!" Sabi ng kuya ko, asawa ng aking hipag, "She did it!" Hay nakú! Na-"shock" akó. Naka-"standby" pa ang mga kápítbáhay namin. Putî ang hipag ko. Kung minsan hindî ko talagá maintindihán siyá. May análisís akó kung bakít pinutol niyá ang punò. Ang hulà ko ay para bagáng mapangláu siyá na gustó niyáng mapaligtás ang kanyáng mga damdamin. Gustó niyáng mag-ibá at ibahín ang kanyáng paligid. Para bagáng nagháhanáp siyá... Hindî ko alám kung anó. Nalungkót akó nang pinutol ang punò.

Esperanto...

Kelkfoje mi pensis pri forlasi Kanadon kaj foriri al alia lando.

Iam mi konsideris labori en Arabujo, eĉ kelktempe. Alitempe, mi konsideris migri en Singapuron. Kaj mi eĉ reŝendis mian resumon al iu kompanio tien sub la espero de akcepto. Sed mi ne ricevis respondon. Nu, mi provis... Mi restis ankoraŭ en Kanado.

At some point, I set up my own company called Vix Virtuality Incorporated, intended as a software and Internet business. Indeed, it remained only as a "simulation" and did not yet profit me directly in non-virtual dollars...



Lulu-insulo sur Fraser-rivero **Lulu Island on Fraser River**

Esperanto...

Ekde la fino de la jaro 2006, mi duafoje revenis al kaj ekloĝis en la Domo Rideau en Riĉmondo, specife ĉe Lulu-insulo sur Fraser-rivero, kun mia patro Franko, mia patrino Belinda, mia frato Paolo, kaj mia kuzino Eva. Sed en la jaro 2008, mia frato kaj lia blanka longhara hundidino Portia translokiĝis aliloken. Pli malfrue, Paolo akiris la griznigran hundidon Pepper ĉe sia nova bona apartamento. Do, estis Portia kaj Pepper kun Paolo. Pli malfrue, Paolo loĝis en tiu bona apartamento kune kun sia amikino Tina, brunharulino, kiu ŝatis la interesan sciencfantastan filmon *Avatar*. Tina havis blondharan intelligentan filinon Britney, ankaŭ kiu loĝis tie.

Restis kvar personoj en la Domo Rideau. Sed pli malfrue, mia onklino Nedy el Kalifornio ekloĝis kune kun ni. Do, ni fariĝis kvin. La kulturo en Riĉmondo estis pli izoleca ol tio en Vankuvero. Mi grade alkutimiĝis. La antaŭurbo Riĉmondo

estis pli dependa al aŭtomobiloj, sed mi ne havis. Kaj la distancoj estis pli grandaj. Do, ekzistis pli da spaco ol en la norda urbo. Mi grade al kutimiĝis...

Volapük...

Glidö, o flen katik! Pardö! Löfob nog lülogön Stelatävi ab dredoy. Mödo reinos du blebob stilik in kased at. Adyö!

Esperanto...

En la komenco de la jaro 2010, la publika krelingva menuo, kiun mi reklamis kiel hobion, ekspanciis al 10 krelingvoj: Esperanto (1887), Weena (2009), Interlingua (1951), Volapük (1879), Na'vi (2005), Vling (2003), M17 (2006), Toki Pona (2001), Lojban (1997), kaj Lingua Franca Nova (1965). Mi tiam pli favoris numerojn 1 kaj 10. Lingua Franca Nova, LFN, estas kreolo, kaj mi fantaziis loĝi sur iu bela insulo en trankvila tropika maro.

Mia hobio pri krei lingvojn daŭris ĝis la 13a de Februaro de tiu jaro 2010. Tiam, mi komencis la projekton pri Moma, futureska Anglabazata Hispaninfluata Kreolinfluata fantazilingvo. Ĝi taŭgus min kiel neformala verklingvo; Esperanton mi rezervus por formale verki. Poste, plu kreis mi aliajn lingvojn, kiujn mi priskribis en mia libreto *I, a Language Inventor* (Mi, Krelingvisto) kaj *Viktor Medrano's List of Conlang Works* (Krelingvoverkara Listo de Viktor Medrano).

Sur Lulu-insulo, la ĉefaj lokoj, kien la lokanoj kutime vizitis, estis la bazaroj, kiel «Richmond Centre», «Lansdowne Mall», aŭ la pli Ĉineska «Aberdeen Mall». Mia kutima manĝvendejo

estis «Safeway», nur 10 aŭ 15 minutojn per marŝi. En Steveston, suda havenvilaĝo, troviĝis «Gerry's Books», kie mi kutime aĉetis brokantajn librojn. Sonja, la alta blankhara babilema vendistino estis mia amikino tie. Antaŭ la Dua Mondmilito, Steveston estis Japania kolonio. Dum la milito, la registaro konfiskis proprietaĵojn de kolonianoj, kiel boatojn. Multaj el la Japanoj estis fiŝistoj. La Japanoj tiam devis translokiĝi al urbetoj for de la marbordo, al la enaj partoj de la provinco.

Mi ankoraŭ povis vidi la nordan neĝkovratan bluan montaron, sed ĝi estis pli fora. Mi nun vivis kiel kvietaj Indianoj.

It seemed that some of my things had been playing hide-and-seek on Lulu Island. From the Web, I ordered a box of high-quality, fine-tipped, black, Faber-Castell Pitt Artist pens, which were "Made in Germany." My drawings with them seemed Animistic and Buddhistic. Well, the pens went missing. Another valuable object, which seemed more sacred, was a Spanish-language cookbook, *La gran cocina mexicana*, of genuine Mexican recipes, which looked very non-European and Animistic. It played hide-and-seek and "reappeared" in the sense that it was really on the wrong bookshelf. Hidden in the freezer, frozen fish from a Japanese grocery in Steveston also went missing, but never reappeared. Some secretive people did not like "children" around Lulu Island because they stole also my red sandals and my blue sandals from my big box of shoes. It seemed that these people wanted me to think like an "adult." Oh, well, things kept playing hide-and-seek at House Rideau. Some of these missing things would reappear... People were afraid of black and getting old...

My new psychiatrist was Dr. Raymond Au, a short, young, seemingly Westernized, Chinese man, whose business-like personality very slowly emanated from within, at every session. It was not unusual that getting acquainted with an Oriental would take a very long time. Many other Orientals had made me accustomed to that already. His supporting social worker was at first a young Chinese woman named Susan, who seemed still nervous and inexperienced. Then later, the social worker became a young white man named Greg, who seemed very interested in my interest about the minority language Catalan in Spain—with its "marshmallow vowels" as I suggested. In Vancouver, a long time ago, my psychiatrist had been Dr. Peter Gibson, a tall white man with brown hair; he seemed interested in things like Parisian culture and linguistics, but I was not sure what his real interests were. He often yawned during a session to feign disinterest. These therapists had training in all sorts of psychological tactics...

Moma...

:: Todd :: iz aur meilman, hu haz darkish blond heir. Luks laik alat ov wait men aiv met—sorta larj-heded with long extremitiz en tending towardz ektomorfizm, bat nat rili tin. Luks laik hiz ansestorz wer meibi from ap in Skandineivia (? Sweden?) samwer. Ofen bringz boxez ov mai buks from :: Amazon.com :: laik Krismas—mor dan wans a mant... ::

A couple from a garden service regularly attended our lawn and garden at House Rideau. One was a *Filipina* named Judy, who spoke Tagalog with a hard accent as if she came from a faraway province in the Philippines and there were jungle and beach. Her gardening partner was Julian, a big Jewish-

looking fellow with dark brown hair. But often, there was a different man, but he always seemed to be a "brownish" man...

My reading habit continued. I discovered a new likable literary genre, fantasy with Oriental settings—Oriental Fantasy. It started with an author named Sasha Miller, then later, Eric V. Lustbader, et cetera. I also started collecting wildly ethnic cookbooks, besides in English, also in French, in Spanish, and in Esperanto. Such books were like fantasy in essence! I continued ordering many French and Spanish books, of various themes, from the Web as my Latino identity kept popping up. But within me still preserved was my everlasting "Esperantic Soul."

I developed more liking to photography as I acquired an expensive SLR (single-lens reflex) camera from air miles at Aeroplan. My very colourful photographs started looking more and more professional with every practice.

Moma...

:: Ofen, ai tok tu pipol araund mai "vilij" in sikrit, mostli bai telepati, wich ai samtaimz ogment bai spiking wid mai maut alaud. Der ar sikrit spai eijents araund mai blok en dei ar from diferent traibz. Adolts biliv in reishal heitred (?wich iz rili fir?). Sam ov diz hav Sainofobia or Kanjifobia. Meni ov da adolts hav varius linguistik, relijos, sexual, en ekonomik problemz... !Sach sili pipol dei ar! Sam ar *jelus* ov da fizikal aspekts, fud, en langwijez ov anoder traib... Eniwei, bikoze ai biliv in filantropi, ai skribol en tok tu dem about diz tingz widaut eni expekteishonz...

Ai reirli so mai old frends laik :: Glen Lee, Steve Kwong, Jai Prakesh Lad, Don Chan, David Ho, Juichi Takahashi, Hidé Inada, Fred Chin, Frank Gee, etc. :: enimor, oldou ai mit sam ov dem on da Web, samtaimz. Toking tu pipol iz laik lukiŋ at a miror samtaimz az wan kud onli si aspekts ov wanself in da oder person. Samtaimz tokiŋ tu samwan iz laik wachiŋ a chip video or ridiŋ a chip magazin. Iz nat dat ai na longer laik pipol—yumanz...

From da somer ov da yir 2010 en rait tru da winter intu da yir 2011, ai wacht alot ov *Star Trek*, ol ov da 5 diferent siriz, meinli tu reminis about old taimz... *Star Trek* waz mai riyal skul truaut mai laif, mai tru ediukeishon. Bikoz mai telepatik brodkasts dou, wich leiter ai faund aut afekted olso oder laif, laik dogz, kats, en rakunz, on Ert, da showz distorbd pipol hu wer les intelijent or les ediukeited en dei started showing sainz ov insaniti...

Iz tru dat wid ol da "majikal" tingz hapeniŋ araund mi, ai stap tinkiŋ dat am yuman. Am nat an Ertling. Wumanli pipol du nat biliv dis at ol. Da houl Ert iz laik a poverti-striken kantri in Afrika... ::

Whilst on Lulu Island on the Fraser River, I managed to make lots of international friends on the Web, especially in services like Facebook, Ipernity, and Twitter.

The Earthlings were searching for direction...

Esperanto...

Nu, mi finfine konkeris ambaŭ lingvojn Esperanto kaj Loĵbano. Esperanto estis amiko ekde la jaroj 1980, sed multe

pli aktive ekde la jaro 1997. Loĵbano estis amiko ekde la jaro 2002, sed multe pli aktive ekde la jaro 2005, kaj ree multe pli aktive ekde la jaro 2011, kiel ondoj en purpura oceano. La lando estas verda, kaj la oceano estas ja purpura...

The land is green, and the ocean is indeed purple...



Blue Bayou

In 2012, I still occupied “Le Casa Rideau” on Lulu Island, with family upstairs and me semi-autonomous in the basement. A feeling of stagnation, like a marshy or bayou feeling, endured. And the neighbours felt it too.

On the 3rd of February of 2012, I started actively learning Interlingua, the 1951 vintage created language, using the exciting Euro-based Tatoeba translation project on the Web. Some friends there suggested that this Blue Tongue was the one suited for me.

I ventured to the neighbourhood Roman Catholic church, St. Paul's, on some mornings to enjoy the spiritual brown 1960's architecture and to mix with people who thought about Heaven.

At this time, I considered myself as having committed to no specific religion, I believing that spirituality was utterly different from religiosity. I still preferred to blend what I know of different religions, although for a long time, it was really generic Animism and non-sect Buddhism which had the greatest impact on me. I thought now that it was better not to proclaim membership to a particular religion, though. People

around me still preferred "shrink-wrapped" religions right off the shelves of the Religion Store.

Lulu Island was still Lulu Island... The marshy feeling endured... For a long while, I ventured habitually into the local Pizza Hut and local shopping areas, and there to witness the ageing, sickness, and poverty of various locals. I was like the prince who was Buddha, who wandered outside of his palatial grounds to be an ascetic to witness what I was witnessing. Things thousands of years ago had not essentially changed thousands of years later.

Towards the end of spring of the year 2012, I decided that I did really like Interlingua, but forever was Esperanto imprinted in my mind like a robust 19th century painting. Meanwhile, Lojban became like an amusing geometrical pattern in my head. My most prized possessions were indeed those right in my mind...

I bought Apple's iPad mini, an intensely graphical "personal digital assistant," on the 11th of July of 2013. It became my muse for everyday. It augmented both my carnal and intellectual pursuits.

At 06:42 in the morning of the 28th of November of 2013, my father died at 76 years old. On the 30th of January of 2014, my paternal grandmother Lydia died at 99 years old. My family changed forever. Where were now those departed? Were they now part of some grand memory bank like the Akashic Records, where everything in their life was recorded? Were they now in some other world?

It was now the 20th of February of 2014. My habitual life on

Lulu Island was going to the neighbourhood Pizza Hut almost everyday to “people-watch.” I played with my iPad mini. I liked everything Latino, like Brazil, Spanish books, mestizo cuisine, etc. Linked to those things was Green Esperanto. I was forever an Esperantist. Lojban still attracted me, but I thought that memorizing contracted forms of root words was heavy memory work. So, Orange things aka things South-East Asian aka “Something Like Vling” made me dream about an alternative fantasy. Essentially, I was now Green and Orange.

It was now the 6th of June of 2014. My iPad mini was now a large library of well over 1000 books and documents. With it, I watched anime and pornography. I studied astronomy. I played games. I participated in forums which were highly graphical in nature. I collected beautiful pictures. I had virtual gardens. The iPad mini was very useful and entertaining.

At the end of last month, May of 2014, Bratislav “Brian” Tepsa had left the neighbourhood, he having bought a new house and abandoning his slender townhouse. One of our last meetings in the neighbourhood was at the Rideau School field. We discussed plenty. Russia and China had been “State Capitalist” regimes and not “Communist” as they claimed to be. There was an alien “spacecraft” hovering invisibly above the grassy field; oh no, it was some kind of “portal”; oh no, it was an “incorporeal being.” Many East Asian logograms, or “Sinograms,” had a categorizing radical along with a hinting phonetic radical; they were not all pictographic. Daoists, I said, liked to be like a simple driftwood. There were aliens aplenty, Brian repeated.

That day on the field last month, the thousands of dandelions were abundant with cloudy tufts of their soon-to-fly seeds.

I knew Brian personally since 2012, but I had seen him walking his two small dogs in the neighbourhood park in previous years without talking to him. Brian was unique in my opinion, as he had a really different reality view than everyone else, it seemed. He recounted stories of farm cows, whose bodies were sapped of blood by UFO aliens and engraved with circles. Ghost-like aliens could phase out of this material world, as they could pass through walls, he said. He said there were secret space missions that the public did not know. He was like no other person that I had met.

We walked to my driveway. There, the subject of religion came up. Brian mentioned that probably Jesus was just legend. “We don't know if he really existed,” he quipped. Religious symbols like Jesus, Buddha, and so on were mysteries. “Someone wrote something,” I suggested. “Someone wrote something,” he said. “Someone wrote something,” I repeated.

Holding his two fluffy dogs, Rafa and Chino, by leashes, he thanked me for being a curious and intelligent friend. On his parting, I said, “I'm a Japanologist. I lived in Japan. I studied their language and culture.” With a smile, he walked away, a rare individual with much wit. His hobby was Ufology with a fervour. He was a tallish white man with brown hair.

Brian told me several times that he was a “weird” kid growing up. I sympathized with him, and I told him that I, too, felt similarly. Brian was from a Yugoslav family, Croatian specifically. I, on the other hand, was from a Filipino family.

Filipinos were Asian-Latino-American, a tricolour culture.

This June of 2014, I had continued my study of Esperanto and Lojban. Esperanto was Green, and Lojban was Purple. I had been pondering a new Orange language in which words had a different spelling for each tone: “gu goo guu; bui bwee bwi; quing qweeng queeng,” like so. I just imagined in my mind. Anyway, Lojban was more than just fantasy and I was delighted with it. I was now Green and Purple.

I liked Lojban because it was very comprehensive. Also, its sound, phonology, reminded me of Persian (Farsi), Arabic, or Greek. Its syntax included features from Amerindian languages and other languages from exotic corners of the Earth.

Esperanto symbolized my Caucasoid heritage, being mostly Mediterranean with high probabilities of bits of Germanic and Slavic influences. In this Green mix, I believed.

In painting, Green came from mixing Yellow and Blue. Purple, on the other hand, came from Red and Blue. The colours were symbolic.

It was just past midnight, now the 7th of June of 2014. Lately, I had been reviewing the Japanese script by calligraphy. Due to much foreign intrusion at home, it had been more than a year, maybe two, that I had not practised. I was not wary of the idea of being a Filipino in Canada, but my actual ethnicity was in question. I liked the term “Hispanic” to refer to many people of different races that revolved around the Spanish language. Analogous to “Hispanic,” “Nipponic” was for the Japanese language. I could consider myself a “Nipponic.”

Japanese had already called me a “Nihonjin,” a Japanese, or the more politically controversial “Nipponjin,” a Japanese beyond the Home Islands. Others told me that Japanese knew that I had Japanese ancestry. To be Japanese was to know the *Kana* phonograms, the heart of the Japanese language. *Kanji* logograms were still considered Chinese. I did not deny my “Filipinoness,” but I was closer to being “Nipponic.”

It had been 20 years now since I had returned to North America, from Japan. But in those 20 years, my delicious memories of that island nation were vivid in my mind. I continued studying the language, though not too seriously. The language was really creative. “Canada” sounded like “Kana da” (It's *Kana*).

It was just past midnight, now the 8th of June of 2014. There were 8 tentacles of an octopus, 8 legs of a spider, 8 legs of a crab, and so on. The number 8 and the colour Blue were associated with Interlingua, the vintage 1951 conlang.

Capitalism was Blue and there were different kinds: Authoritarian State Capitalism, Democratic State Capitalism, Authoritarian Market Capitalism, Democratic Market Capitalism, and so on. I wished that people in general did not have to worry about money because it really bogged down spiritual progress. Money should not be the people's religion. Money should just be a tool.

I still favoured Esperanto over Interlingua. Esperanto seemed more mathematical. It was the one that suited my personality. In the coming years, as devices would get more advanced, the accents would not be a problem. Of course, if I

wrote on paper, there would be no problem at all. On my Apple iPad mini, accents for many languages, including Esperanto, were easily accessible, being just a button press or finger swipe away.

It was almost 3 o'clock in the morning on the 9th of February of 2015, local Lulu Island time. I sat in my dark room in front of my netbook computer screen to face my English. I had been keeping busy for months being on multilingual web forums, like Google+, Facebook, and Tatoeba. My Japanese had crept out of dormancy and had become a daily language for me, a favourite haunt being a meditative Google+ cafe community called *Kōhī ga Suki Da (I Like Coffee)*. Everyday, there was an array of beautiful coffee-and-dessert graphics. Other communities boasted other drinks and food galore. And they were not just Japanese. Some had eerie temples and scenery. I collected thousands of delicious pictures from these esoteric groups.

Pornography and anime also occupied my time. My iPad mini had been really amusing.

Since late 2014, I got acquainted with new friends from the Soviet gang of delivery men at the local Pizza Hut. There was Yaroslav, a Ukrainian who might have had a tinge of Hun from long ago. He was a seaman, a ship engineer, now in Canada, studying Academic Writing in English. There was the musician Adil Bestybaev, a Kazakh, possibly a mestizo of Turkic and some Mongoloid. He was like Genghis Khan. He was highly educated with knowledge about anthropology and linguistics. Both Yaroslav and Adil spoke Russian. I liked chatting with them at Pizza Hut. Life, like a wheel, rolled on...

I was fond of Adil's character. Adil made music for movies in his homeland of Kazakhstan. He also composed other music that sounded orchestral to me. Adil's people seemed abstract as they liked dealing with pure mathematics and orchestral music. Adil's wife, also Kazakh, was a computer scientist. She, in recent years, became involved in evangelistic Christianity, which she proselytized to hesitant Adil. Many Kazakhs like Adil looked Japanese in appearance. Kazakhs like Adil had a Russocentric view of reality, as Kazakhstan was once part of the Soviet Union. He had deep knowledge about the anthropology and ancient history of Central Asia and surroundings.

Yaroslav's Ukraine was also once part of the Russocentric Soviet Union. Yaroslav had a strange philosophy of being "plain" and not being conspicuous, as if he had belonged to the Amish. He served for some time in the Soviet military, as it was obligatory then. He said he enjoyed his Soviet childhood, and he enjoyed the camping and such. The most striking thing he said to me was that within a thousand years or so, humankind would have to seek a new world to live on, beyond this Earth which would perhaps be in ruin and decay. He was paraphrasing something Stephen Hawking, the famous physicist, had said. Yaroslav was a white man with almost black hair.

It was now the 15th of March of 2016. I had amassed a valuable collection of graphics via the Tumblr forum and Google+. I had now explicit sexual graphics of Japanese, other Asian, and Latino men and women in what looked like expensive sceneries. I collected various food graphics that looked very exotic. The 21st century was already wondrous. I could not accomplish such in the 1970's, for example. With

stereoscopic satellite imaging, I gleefully scanned Western, Northern, Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe, as well as East and South-East Asia, as well as Hawai'i and Madagascar. Indeed, the 21st century was already wondrous. My iPad mini was a marvellous personal data assistant.

Early in 2016, I expanded my knowledge of Volapük and Hawaiian via the Tatoeba forum, which I frequented. I really liked Keali'i Reichel's song "Pua Mikinolia" or Magnolia Flower. But I was prominently still an Esperantist, Lojbanist, etc.

The year 2016 was the 50th anniversary of the *Star Trek* franchise. I was born in the same year, 1966, when the shows started appearing on television. It was no coincidence. The franchise had been my edutainment school for many years. I was a Trekker. The shows were crowded with so many aliens and magical technology, and some might think them *corny*, but there were truth and philosophy in them.

It was now St. Patrick's Day, the 17th of March of 2016. It would be a green day for Esperanto. I heard my Fijian neighbours, the Wongs, on their driveway, as they liked sunny days like today. Mr. Wong said everybody thought I was like a foreigner. I was still that weird kid in the neighbourhood.

It was now the 21st of October of 2016, the Halloween season. I had studied more Elefen, a kind of Latinate creole mimicry. I liked it, but I would persevere with verdant Esperanto. To celebrate the 50th year of *Star Trek*, I was watching the six series dubbed in French and in Italian on the Netflix app of my Apple iPad mini. There was rumour that a seventh series was coming up in 2017. My new haunt was the local ice cream

parlour, to which I switched from the local pizza parlour. Two local 7-11 stores were my regular haunts, also.

(This article I started in the year 2003. I often used here the ISO 8601 standard for dates and times.)